THE WONDERFUL WHEEL

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Mary Tracy Earle,
Class of 1885.

THE WONDERFUL WHEEL

THE WONDERFUL WHEEL

BY

MARY TRACY EARLE

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1896

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TO
FOUR LITTLE FIDDLERS

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THE WONDERFUL WHEEL

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CHAPTER I

A HOODOO POTTER

HE little fiddler was the only child in Potosi who did not run from Giacomo Barse, the potter. She ran to him and with him, for she was his own baby.

Giacomo was tall and thin, with strange flashing black eyes, and a black mustache so long that he draped it over his ears when he worked. Sometimes the fiddler climbed onto a crock behind him and caught the ends of it at the back of his head, and played he was her horse; and then he usually threatened to put her on the wheel with the clay, and make her over into something less troublesome.

The fiddler knew all about how the clay whirled on the wheel, growing tall and slender

or broad and short under his hands; but the other children knew nothing of it, for they never passed the pottery except at full speed. Giacomo did not know that people told the children he was a "Hoodoo," and he wondered why they only ran the faster when he called to them to come in and play with his baby, and he would make little water monkeys for them on the wheel. When the fiddler was wandering around outside the door, they even ran from her; but Giacomo and his little fiddler were used to playing alone together, and, on the whole, they liked it just as well as if people had played with them.

It did not seem as if any one should have been afraid of the potter, simply because he made queerly-shaped jugs and vases, and mugs which poured the water out where you were not expecting it, or even because he painted his pottery buildings in stripes of red and white and blue, as no houses were ever painted before, and the palings of his high garden fence alternately green and yellow, and his hand-cart a purple, royal enough for any king who needed one; there had been a time, in fact, when Potosi people were rather proud of Giacomo's queerness, and joked him about his

love of bright combinations of color,—"artistic effects," he called them; but in the three years since his wife had died, and he had been taking care of his baby, people had stopped joking with him, or even talking to him when they could help it, and they no longer whispered behind his back that he was "just a little cracked," but they used that other word, which frightened the children. So Giacomo was left with his baby and his thoughts for company; and he had such an unusual baby and such unusual thoughts that he scarcely stopped to ask why he was left with them, except once in a while, when the baby screamed because the children ran away from her.

One day the potter started across Potosi, trundling an enormous green vase in the purple hand-cart, while the baby ran ahead and behind and around him all at once. The vase was one of those which people put beside their doorsteps and plant with flowers, and it was of unusual size, deep and bowl-like, having been ordered for a certain large century plant which was owned by a rich man living on the beach. Giacomo was making the best time he could with his cart and his vase and his baby, for some of the great white thunder-

heads that are always sleeping round the horizon of Potosi in August had risen swiftly since he had started, and a sweet storm-wind was already rustling across Potosi Point, clearing the air for a gush of rain.

"Hurry on there, you little fiddler, I 'll catch you," he began calling, and then the baby flew in front of him like a little quail, lifting her shoulders as if they were wings, while Giacomo pursued at a measured trot, with the great vase jarring securely along on its side in the cart. Yet no matter how steady the vase nor how swift the baby, vases and babies are not good companions with which to outrun a shower, and before they were nearly to the beach the big drops began to fleck the road and to splash into their faces. The splashes took the little fiddler unaware, and she resented them, and came running back to Giacomo with her confident hands upstretched.

"I don't like those — those rains to hit me," she cried. "See, I 'm not heavy, you can lift me — you carry me."

Giacomo looked at the cart, which needed his two hands, looked at the vase, and looked at the baby. Then, draping the ends of his

mustache over his ears, he stooped, and all at once the little fiddler was no longer beseeching him from the ground, but was sitting in the inside of the vase, while he looked at her through its great round mouth. It took her several thoughts to decide whether it was a laughing or a crying matter, but she finally agreed with Giacomo, and laughed.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked.

"I'm going to give you a carriage ride," said the potter; "but if you don't stop sticking your head out, and crawling round and trying to roll the vase out of the cart, I'll put you on my whizzing-wheel with the clay when we get home and make a pint cup of you,—you see if I don't."

The little fiddler drew back and her lip quivered. "No, no, papa," she protested vehemently, "a quart cup! a quart cup! I don't want to be a mean little pint cup!"

"You take care, then, if you don't want to be a pint cup," said the potter threateningly, and picked up the handle of the cart and bent himself over it and ran.

They sped through the great slant sheets of rain, and the people who saw them thought

that Giacomo was hurrying because for once he did not have his baby with him; and they never guessed that the little fiddler was curled up inside the vase, staring out in fascination at the slender, nimble, drenched figure of her father, smiling and nodding at her while he pursued her, headlong through the rain.

Just as he passed under one of the tall pine-trees which stood by the road, there came a blinding flash of lightning, and then the little fiddler felt herself thrown forward with a strange thrill into the dark. The pine-tree had been struck and shivered, and one of its great branches had crashed down upon Giacomo, and he lay under it stunned and helpless, not even knowing enough to be glad that his last effort had sent the cart flying into safety, with the fiddler lying white and still, but uninjured, in the vase.

Some frightened men came running out from a house near by, and pulled the heavy branches from Giacomo and looked at his ashen face.

"Reckon he 's dead," one of them ventured, "might ha' knowed he 'd come to some such end." They hesitated a moment, fearing to touch him. Then one of them bent down and

felt over the potter's heart, but looked more frightened as he drew his hand away. "Boys," he gasped, "he 's a-livin'. Might ha' knowed a hoodoo could n' be killed like that." They looked at one another questioningly. "Reckon if he 's lived through that he can take care of hisse'f," they decided, yet they still stood and looked at him, feeling very contemptible in having determined to leave him where he lay. Suddenly one of them gave a little whoop of relief. "If there don't come ole Doctor," he cried, "an' he can do with Barse jus' what he has a mind ter."

The doctor came rushing along, leaning forward against the rain. "What 's this?" he cried, stopping short. "Man stunned by lightning and got a broken leg? Dump that vase out of the hand-cart and put him in. Here, take hold — no!" For the little fiddler had come to herself, and was lifting her little pinched face, with its great eyes like Giacomo's, to look out of the vase. Even the doctor gazed at her a moment as if she were something unreal. She stared back curiously, and then began to cry.

"Huh!" said the doctor. He was disgusted with himself, and it did not seem as if even his

gold watch could pacify that wrathful voice. One good thing, its sound was rousing the potter. Giacomo lifted his head, and, seeing the people standing helpless between him and his baby, he tried to rise, but fell back with a whispered word to the child.

"Here, what you all waiting for?" demanded the doctor. "Come, my little lady, we've got to put your papa in your place, and I'll carry you and you can play he 's your baby, riding — how 's that?" he motioned to one of the men to take one side, and they whisked the vase, baby and all, out of the cart, and set it down on the ground. Then they put Giacomo into the cart, while the baby grew angrier and angrier as she tried to climb up the bulging, slippery sides of the vase.

"You bad, bad, *méchants* men," she screamed, "you sha'n't do that to my papa! You sha'n't! You sha'n't!"

"Be still," Giacomo cried out faintly to her. "Be still — or I 'll make you — into a pint cup — when we get home."

That awful threat was almost reassuring at a time like this, and the little fiddler was calmed by it to waiting with more composure until she was stowed away in her father's arms — for

he would have it so — and they were being wheeled off toward the pottery.

One of the men went inside and helped the doctor put Giacomo to bed and dress his leg, but as soon as that was done he started away, "What?" cried the doctor, who had followed him out of doors, "you 'dassent' stay and take care of him — what you afraid of? Where are the rest of the men? What 's become of them?"

"They dassent come into the pottery," said the man. "There 's queer things goes on there. I 'm not skeery, I don't mind very much myself in the daytime, but there ain't no money would hire me to stay here at night, — not in the same room with that man and that there wheel. That there wheel don't belong to Barse," he added in a lower tone. "Barse rents hit from the devil."

"Stuff!" said the doctor.

"I 've seed hit myself, through the winder, by night," said the man, nodding his head.

"So you 're willing to let a man with a broken leg lie alone in a house with a helpless child to take care of?" said the doctor. "Be off, then; I reckon there are better people than you in Potosi."

The man winced. "Well," he said, doggedly, turning a sidelong glance toward the doctor, as he started away, "if you find man, woman or child that 'll stay all night with Barse in that pottery, I 'll eat the first crow that 's cooked for me. They 're all like me, they 've *seed*."

The doctor marched back into the house. "Barse," he said, "do you have any people anywhere that you could send for to come and take care of you?"

"Not a soul of my own," said the potter, "but I 've got a creole sister-in-law up on Cypress Creek, and I reckon she 'd come. I have n't seen her since my wife died, and she 's got a lot of kids to look after, but there 's a mother-in-law in the case, and I reckon they could be left with her. I don't know anything better than to send up there and see. 'Arriette Rousselle's her name, Antoine Rousselle's wife."

"I 'll send," said the doctor, "and in the mean time I 'll keep an eye on you, unless somebody calls me away."

He went out, and when he came back he brought something with him for Giacomo and the baby to eat. "Odd place this," he said, and began nosing around among the vases and

pitchers and flower-pots and water-coolers, or ollas— "monkeys," they call them in Potosi. They were of every queer form and color that had ever come into Giacomo's queer head; but before the doctor had half looked through the odd useful things, and the still odder attempts to make everything under the sun out of clay, there was a call outside the pottery, and he was summoned to go to another urgent case. He came and stood a moment by the potter's bed. It was just sundown. The storm had cleared away and a golden light streamed in through the window and glowed on the eccentric medley of the room. Everything was rather dusty, yet it had a certain neatness of its own, for the furniture and the shelves were all painted, brightly painted, and even the potter's wheel, which stood by the window, looking clay-daubed and innocent, had had its coating in the potter's craze for adorning everything in reach. The doctor found himself looking at the baby to see if she was painted, too, but she was not. She was a dark, elfin little thing, even now, when she had crawled up beside her father and fallen fast asleep.

"Is she likely to be quiet all night?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," said Giacomo, "or if she is n't I 'll sing to her."

"I suppose your sister 'll get in about ten o'clock," said the doctor, "and I guess you 'll get along all right till then, but I 'll send somebody else around if I come across anybody — that 's free to come."

Giacomo smiled bitterly. "You 'll not find anybody that 's free," he said, "and if you could tell me why, I 'd like to know. But if you 'll just light that lamp over there and set it on the wheel before you go, I reckon we 'll make out even if my sister don't come."

The doctor lighted the lamp. "I 'll be in early in the morning," he said. "Good-night and good luck to you," and he took Giacomo's hand. When he had gone Giacomo held up his hand and looked at it.

"Did n't know I was lonesome," he said. "Ridiculous how good it felt to have my hand crunched like that."

Late that night the messenger who had gone to Cypress Creek drove back within pointing distance of the pottery. "Dat is de place," he said to the small girl who sat beside him.

"W'y doan' yo' drive up moah close?"

asked the girl. They were speaking French just then, but they had a soft, slurred accent which caressed the word, whether in French or English.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "I 'ave been moah close at oddah time," he answered, "an' I t'ink, as yo' 'ave to go inside, it make not ver' much mattah wheah yo' staht." He had said little to her on their way coming, but the little had made her wonder, and at this she wondered still more. She climbed down from the wagon, took her bundle from the man, and turned toward the pottery.

"*Attendez!*" the man cried out, "waid a minute. I 'ave not de wish to scare yo', but listen, do not touch de wheel,—it is of the devil."

"W'at? I do not understand," said the girl.

The man gave a dry little laugh. "I made a little joke," he said. "W'en he is sick like dis, dere will be not'ing at all of strange."

The girl stared at him, her eyes growing big in the dark, then she faced back toward the pottery, walked up to the door and knocked.

"Come in," called a voice.

As she opened the door she heard the rattle of the wagon wheels rolling away over the hard shell road. She caught her breath and

went into the low, shadowy room. The little lamp shone out feebly on a confusion of half-seen forms, that all seemed pointing toward the strange white face of the potter lifted from the pillow, the long black mustache draped back into the darkness.

"Who are you?" asked Giacomo sharply.

"I am Clothilde Rousselle," the girl answered, "an' my mama she say, tell Uncle Giacomo yo' are fourteen year old, an' yo' 'ave grow ver' much since he see yo'."

"Come here," said Giacomo; and when she had come close enough for scrutiny, he looked her over. "Yes," he said, "I reckon you 're the same Clothilde that was n't much bigger than this when I saw you," and he made a motion toward the fiddler, whom Clothilde had not noticed, sleeping beside him.

"Oh, is it de baby?" she cried eagerly.

"Walk round the bed softly so you can see her," said Giacomo. "Why did your mother send you instead of coming herself? You 've grown, but you 've not grown enough; I wanted a woman."

"Mama say," said Clothilde in a low voice as she leaned ecstatically over the baby's dark head, "mama say to tell yo' dat wid my gran'-

modder so sick it is imposseeb' dat she come, an' dat I 'ave grow so *grande* I work like a woman."

"But do you know how to take care of a baby?" asked the potter, looking over her grave little figure with growing approval.

"Home we 'ave always babies," said Clothilde proudly.

"Humph," said Giacomo, "in a big family people never know how to take care of children, they don't have time. What I want to know is if you can sing a baby to sleep, and make her laugh when she wants to cry, and if she 's sick make her think it 's fun to take her medicine, and when you have to work make her think you 're doing it just to entertain her, —that 's what I mean by taking care of a baby. Can you do that?"

"I doan' know, me, 'bout de medicine," said Clothilde, "because it is ver' bad in de mouth, an' dey know it; but all dose odder t'ing, yas, I can do dose."

"All right," said Giacomo, "then you 'll do better than most women. Now you just go into that room and go to bed and get rested, for the little fiddler will give you a lively day to-morrow."

"Uncle Giacomo," asked Clothilde, hesitating a little, "w'at was dat yo' call her? We hear yo' name her Louise?"

Giacomo laughed lightly. "Oh, that was at first, when she was christened," he explained. "Then when she began to creep, she scuttled about so quick, like a fiddler crab, that your aunty called her 'Troululu,' and I sometimes call her that and sometimes say it in plain English, little fiddler. There, go quick, she 's fussing as if our talking was about to wake her."

Clothilde lighted a queer pottery lamp that her uncle pointed out to her, and crept on tiptoe into the adjoining room. As she closed the door and lifted the lamp to see around her, she shrank back from somebody standing by the window. Then she noticed a stiffness in the figure, and, going up to it, she found that it was made from jars of different sizes, the one on top having a bland crockery face, which smiled at her wherever she went. Finally, she lay down on the bed without undressing, and left her little lamp lighted close at hand. But whenever she closed her eyes, she saw her Uncle Giacomo's strange face, and whenever she opened them, the crockery man smiled at her, and, between them, she could not sleep.

CHAPTER II

THE SANTA CLAUS GIRL

IT would not be the neighbors on Cypress Creek who would leave a man with a broken leg alone in his house with a baby to take care of. That was the first thought Clothilde had when she woke in the morning, for just when she was not remembering about it, she had dropped asleep after all.

Everything was quiet in the next room, so she did not stir; but pretty soon she heard a clear little voice say, "Papa!"

"Yes, little fiddler," said Giacomo, "what is it?"

"Papa, there is a big white dream in the corner that troubles me. Tell it, 'Go away dream, you 're no good.'"

"Go away dream, you 're no good," repeated the potter solemnly. "Now you just

watch and you 'll see it climb right out of that window over there where the sun comes in."

"It won't go, Papa," the fiddler announced a moment later, in a voice with half a sob in it. "That big white dream won't go, he says,"—here the fiddler's tone sank to a gloomy squeak,—"'I won't go till Papa sings *Tournez toujours.*'"

"Why, this is morning, Troululu, and what do you think happened in the night?"

"I don't know," said the little fiddler, sitting up very straight. "What?"

"Somebody that you 're going to like very much came to see you."

"Santa Claus?" asked the fiddler with eagerness. Santa Claus was the only friend who was left them at the pottery.

"Well, Santa Claus did n't stay, you know he never does," said Giacomo; "but he sent you his love, and he left you a nice, nice, big cousin to play with."

"And won't she run away when I go up to her?" asked the fiddler.

A passing anger twitched the potter's face. "No, she 'll not run away from you," he said. "Santa Claus would n't bring a girl that ran away."

"Where is she?" demanded the little fiddler, and began clambering excitedly across her father to drop from the bed on his side, where she would land in the middle of the room.

"A-h-h," groaned the potter through set teeth.

"Can I help yo', Uncle Giacomo?" asked Clothilde's voice at the door.

"Come in, Clothilde," said Giacomo, "come in, and get acquainted with your little fiddler; you know you 're the Santa Claus girl that 's come to play with her."

Clothilde opened the door and stood a little shyly on the threshold. Troululu had come round the bed and stood with her hand on the footboard, looking a little shyly at Clothilde. Presently she advanced a step. "Did Santa Claus say I could play with your hair?"

"Yas," said Clothilde, and her grave, brown cheeks suddenly began to dimple. "Yas, my mama — I mean Santa Claus say my hairs are not so beautiful that the baby may not play wid dem."

The fiddler came up and passed her little hand gently over Clothilde's bent head. "Yo' can take hole of dem," said Clothilde generously, "it does n' hurt."

"Let her take her own time," said Giacomo; "she 'll hurt you fast enough without being asked to. But now, if you locked the door last night unlock it again, for the doctor promised he would come in early to see how I was getting on, and then the fiddler will take you out to the kitchen and show you the coffee-pot. You can make coffee, can't you? I 'm 'most starved for some."

"Oh, yas," said Clothilde, "I can make it," and she left the room with the little fiddler running joyously in advance and pulling her by the hand. Giacomo dropped his head back in the pillow with a weary sigh. A sense of relaxation stole over him, and when Clothilde and the baby came back with a cup of coffee, Clothilde pulled the child out of the door again with a "sh-sh," for the potter was asleep.

He started awake when he heard the doctor's footsteps outside, and the doctor opened the door and found him waiting with a look of quiet in his brilliant eyes.

"Well, Barse, your sister came all right, did she?" the doctor said at once.

Giacomo shook his head. "She had better sense," he declared. "She sent me something that knows how to take care of a baby better than any woman. Listen, will you!"

The doctor listened, and heard a duet of tinkling childish laughter in the little yard behind the pottery.

"Now, I sent those two out to make me some coffee a while ago," Giacomo went on, "and there 's the coffee, I reckon, standing down by the door, but how was I to get it? They brought it in while I was asleep, I suppose, and now they 're playing. But don't you know that if a woman had come here she 'd have found something that needed scrubbing about the house, and now she would be scrubbing, and scolding the baby for getting in her path. My mother and my wife always scrubbed if I was sick, and I know that my sister-in-law would; but there 's something out in the yard this morning that has a woman's sense where it is needed and then is content to be a child."

"You 're in luck, Barse," said the doctor, feeling a little curious to see that "something" in the yard. "Who is it out there, and what do you call her?"

"My little fiddler calls her a Santa Claus girl," said Giacomo.

"Good enough," said the doctor. "And now for that leg."

"Papa! Papa! Papa!" screamed the fiddler,

bursting into the room, "Come quick, quick, quick! My bad birds have all flown up in the trees. Come and catch them quick, quick, quick! Come tell them, 'Go back, birds; you must n't fly away, you 're *méchants*."

Clothilde followed in excitement. "Dey 'ave go," she cried, "but I can get dem, me. I try to keep her, but she t'ink it is only you who can catch dem."

"Did you open the cages again, you little fiddler?" asked Giacomo.

"I did n't open them on purpose, papa," said the fiddler, sobbing. "I did it un*for*tunately. I said to the birds, 'Come out, birds, and see my goodness,' and I made my goodness on my face for them, and then they were bad *méchants* birds and flew up into the trees."

"If yo' tell me w'ere is deir seeds," said Clothilde, "I will give dem some fresh seeds and some water in deir cages, and I will put myself into de trees, and w'en dey are afraid of me dey may go home."

"That 's the idea," said the doctor. "Here, get your uncle — is it your uncle? — some fresh coffee, and then I 'll help you catch the birds."

"No, you sha'n't help catch them," cried the

fiddler. "My papa will catch them, and not you. I don't like you, you man; I want you to go away. You hurt my papa *les*terday."

"Why, Troululu," said the potter, reproachfully, and then he drew her to him and whispered something to her.

"No, you sha'n't make me into a pint cup," the fiddler shrieked, "I 'm going to my Santa Claus girl. I don't like you when you say that," and she snatched herself away and ran out of the room. She had never run away from Giacomo before, for there had never been anybody to run to. He drew his hand across his eyes, as if he could not quite see what had happened. "My being sick makes her a little nervous," he explained. "Do you see that gray bird high up there on the third shelf, among those little water-monkeys and the frog-mugs? I wish you 'd hand it down. I reckon it 's too high for Clothilde. It 's got the bird-seed in it, and I keep it up there out of the baby's way; but she 's getting so she can climb 'most to the top of everything. I 've found her as high up as that blue clay angel, putting one of her dresses on it."

"You 've got a lot of queer things in your shop, Barse," the doctor said, looking about

him again as he reached up for the gray bird, which proved to be a sort of bottle, for which the head was a stopper. "I never was here till yesterday, but people say, you know, that you have an extraordinary potter's wheel."

"I have a very good wheel," said Giacomo, "but it 's my experience that a wheel is just a wheel at the best. The difference comes in a man's ideas. Now, I have something extraordinary inside my head."

"Yes, I have heard people say that also," said the doctor, and he looked keenly at the potter, but Giacomo was intent on the doorway. The doctor turned and saw the fiddler coming in very slowly, with a cup of hot coffee on a plate. Clothilde was close behind, and she glanced up at the doctor with a smile.

"Here 's your coffee, papa; my Santa Claus girl let me bring it," cried the fiddler. "She 's a good Santa Claus girl, and you 're a good papa, and that 's a good man, and I 'm a good Troululu. See my goodness!" — and she gathered up her face into a little smirk that made the doctor and her father laugh.

Clothilde had seen the coffee safely into her uncle's hands and was peering down for a glimpse of the goodness, when she started out

and flew into the yard. The doctor followed, and saw her make a passing dive for a stick near the doorway, and rush with it at a cat which crouched in the sun with gleaming eyes, guarding something yellow between its paws. The cat sprang away from her and darted like a long, gray flash along the ground and through a hole in the palings. Clothilde came back to the doctor, with a limp, fluttering canary in her hands.

"I would like dat cat to be kill," she cried.

The doctor took the bird. "Let 's see what 's happened to it," he said. "Perhaps it has a leg broken, too, like your uncle. You have n't told me yet if Barse is your uncle."

"Yas, he is de brudder-in-law of my mudder," said Clothilde.

"Well," said the doctor, "the bird 's leg is broken, and a good deal worse broken than your uncle's. I don't believe I want to dress that little leg without a consultation — let 's take it into the house."

"I say, Barse," he began, "an old patient like you always has to wait for attention if there is a fresh accident. Look here, a cat had grabbed this little fellow, and would n't have left anything of him if your niece had n't

been so quick. Now, see this little leg. That 's a bad compound fracture, with more complications than the size of the patient warrants. The merciful thing would be to kill the bird at once."

"That 's Trascan, the knowingest one of all," said the potter. "And he 's got a family to take care of, too. Is he bound to die, anyway?"

"Why, if that leg was amputated, and the little thing had good care and good luck, he would get well all right," the doctor answered. "But what kind of a world do you think this would be for a one-legged canary? Now, if he were a crane or a stork—"

"I 'll agree to make it square with him afterward," Giacomo declared. "If you 'll just leave enough of him for a start I 'll make a new bird of him, and he 'll enjoy it. It 's lots better to be mended than killed, when you have things depending on you, is n't it, old fellow?" and he stroked the bird's head with one of his long, thin fingers.

And so the second patient was operated on, and Giacomo had it brought back to him on a little pad of cotton, and held it in his hand while his own leg was examined and the doc-

tor was making him comfortable. The children, at the same time, were luring the other birds back to their cages by means of much seed and water and fruit, much clamoring of the excited little fiddler below the trees, and much climbing of the cool-headed Clothilde through the branches. When order was restored all through the premises, and the doctor was about to go, he took Clothilde to one side.

"Little Santa Claus girl," he said, "it seems to me you are going to have a good deal to look out for. You want to keep that baby quiet, if you can, so that your uncle won't get too nervous and excited. It 's bad for him to have her shouting round him in the way she does, and yet you can't take her very far out of his sight or he 'll worry about that. You 'll just have to be as smart about it as you can, and whenever I have time I 'll help you. There 's one thing you 'll soon see," he added, "so I might as well tell you, that not another soul in Potosi will come near you, and you need n't expect people to be friendly if you happen to come across them."

"W'y is dat?" asked Clothilde, looking at him with round and solemn eyes.

"I don't quite know," said the doctor; "perhaps you can find out. Your uncle 's a queer man, and they believe a lot of stuff about him — and his wheel. You 've got a level head, I can see that, and you 're not going to be scared at nothing; but I thought I 'd tell you, so that if anybody happens to talk any folderol to you, you 'll not believe it."

"It would not be posseeb'," said Clothilde, drawing herself up, "to believe anyt'ing bad of de own 'usband of my own *tante* — aunt. I 'ave hear it and not believe it already."

"What?" exclaimed the doctor. "I told Philipe Gomez not to frighten you last night. Well," — he put his hand on Clothilde's shoulder, — "he got the wrong girl, did n't he? I see Santa Claus makes his girls out of clear grit, and it 's a good way." Then he gave her a few directions for her duties as nurse. Fortunately he lived near enough to look in several times a day as he passed, and there was little she would need to do for Giacomo; yet, in spite of the doctor's praise, when he left she felt rather burdensomely weighted with her cares and trusts.

CHAPTER III

"TOURNEZ TOUJOURS"

AFTER her first day with Clothilde, the little fiddler did not wish to sleep. She was probably afraid that Santa Claus would take in the night what he had brought in the night, and when Giacomo told Clothilde to undress her, the baby threw herself on the floor and cried in wrath.

"Well, well," said Giacomo, "after all, this is the first day she ever had any one younger than I am to play with. Just play horse once more, Clothilde, and she 'll be ready for bed."

So Clothilde let the baby take the two long braids of hair and drive her in and out among the flower-pots and urns and baking-dishes on the floor, until the outside door opened unexpectedly, and the doctor walked in.

"What? What?" he began. "Working up an excitement so as to have a bad night?

Here, you little fiddler, it 's time you were in bed."

Clothilde stopped, her face flushed with running and confusion. "It is uncle Giacomo dat wish dat I always play de horse," she said.

"Yes," said the potter, cheerfully, "I told her to take another turn. You know, doctor, that my little girl never has had her fill of playing in her life."

"No child ever had," said the doctor, "nor grown person, either,— but say, she 's pulling your niece's hair out."

The baby had been flicking Clothilde's braids over her back, but when she found that Clothilde really would not go on, she threw all her weight on to the hair, and dragged vengefully. Clothilde was reaching around and trying to unclasp her hands.

"Troululu!" called the potter, "you 're hurting your Santa Claus girl, and she will go away if you are n't good to her. Let go of her hair, or I 'll put you on my wheel with the clay —"

"You 're too sick," said the fiddler, calmly. She had learned in the course of the day that he was sick.

"Troululu!" said the potter. "Doctor, I reckon you 'd better take her off."

The doctor did it very promptly. It was a long time since he had had any little girls, and he was sure that they had never done things like that. He held the baby's hands tight for a moment. "Now, be good," he ordered, as he let her go.

The fiddler seemed more to float away from him than to run; she was so angry that her feet scarcely touched the floor, and she drifted off as if a wave were buoying her, until she stumbled against a great baking-dish and fell into it, screaming at the top of her voice.

"Huh!" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Giacomo, "she 's a little fiery, but it 's 'come easy, go easy' with her tempers, and she 's been a good deal excited today. Clothilde will cheer her up; she seems to know how to treat children, and I wish you 'd see how Trascan 's getting along. He 's been cheeping a good deal since you were here, and I don't know whether he 's just lonesome without his leg, or whether it 's hurting him more than it ought."

The doctor picked the little bird tenderly out of its nest of cotton, examined it by the lamp, and pronounced that the trouble must be lonesomeness, as there was nothing amiss. "He was worse off than you were, Barse," he

said, "but he 'll get around the first. What kind of a leg will you make him — pottery?"

"I 'd like to," said Giacomo, "it 's about the only thing I 've never made, but I reckon I 'll have to use wood, because it 's lighter. Look."

Clothilde's hands were sending a shadow dog nosing from rounded form to form along the wall, and the little fiddler had somehow known it, and had raised her head and was peering at it through her tumbled hair, and there was silence in the room.

"I told you this morning that you were in luck," said the doctor. "Now I don't suppose I 'll be in again, so I 'll fix you up for the night."

When everything had been done for his comfort, the potter had still something to ask. "If you 'd just bring my wheel up a little closer," he said, "I reckon I 'll have to teach Clothilde how to run it to-night."

"What?" said the doctor, "run the wheel at night and teach Clothilde,— what for?"

"It 's one of the ways I 've fallen into," said Giacomo, "and there 'll be no getting the fiddler to sleep without it. That 's the way she 's gone to sleep ever since her mother

died. When she 's undressed I sing to her and run the wheel. I 've made some mighty original things when I was putting her to sleep."

The doctor drew up the wheel. "I 'm not in a hurry," he said; "I guess I 'll sit down over in a corner, where your little crab won't see me, and watch the working of it. I may be wanting to recommend all the women with babies to buy themselves potter's wheels."

"They would n't take the trouble to run them," Giacomo scoffed; "they 'd rather scrub or sew. I 'm not going to run it either — this month," he added, with a sigh; "but it won't take Clothilde long to learn enough for the fiddler, and I can do the singing. Come, Troululu, climb up beside me, and we 'll teach our Santa Claus girl to play *Tournez toujours*."

Clothilde went round slowly and stood by the wheel. She was very grateful to the doctor for staying; for, with all her bravery, she had given the wheel a wide berth in the daytime, and she did not know whether or not she could have touched it at night, alone with her uncle Giacomo's white face and his black eyes and his long black mustache.

"Now, just put your foot on that treadle

under there," said the potter, "and keep kind of stepping along until you get the wheel to turning smoothly — no, no, don't be so jerky, just go up and down regularly — make believe your foot 's in a rocking-chair — that 's a little more like it — there, keep trying until you can make it go pretty fast, for then it will begin to whiz, and that 's what the fiddler likes to hear, just the same as she likes to see the whirling. When you get to going a little better, you can take some of the soft clay out of that tub covered up over there, and put it on the very center of the wheel, and do what you please with it; of course, you can't make anything at first, but I 'll teach you by and by. Balks once in a while, don't it."

Clothilde stood treading away at the wheel, which ran gustily, now fast and now slow, and sometimes seemed to get out of its connection with the treadle and would not go at all. Her foot had stepped on the bar gingerly at first, but nothing evil seemed to come from it. The wheel was a very primitive one, and as Giacomo had partly made it himself, the bearings of it were not as close and true as those of a sewing-machine; but otherwise treading it was not much different from running a sewing-

machine. Clothilde had seen that done once, when a man came up Cypress Creek trying to sell one. Nobody had money enough to buy, but nobody called the man names on account of it. Gradually she gained skill and confidence, and the motion grew almost smooth. The potter began singing a song that went round and round like the wheel, and as he sang, his light, cautious fingers unfastened the little fiddler's dress. The fiddler would not stay still, but if it hurt him to have her creeping over him he did not say so, nor stop singing the little French song with its recurrent burden:

"*Tournez encore, tournez toujours.*"

It was a spinning-song, but it fitted very well with a potter's wheel.

When the fiddler had unconsciously wriggled out of most of her clothing, it was a problem with Giacomo how, as he could not lift himself, he was to get her into her night-dress. Finally he put his two hands inside the gown, and, spreading it open, looked through the white tunnel that it made, and changed the song he was singing with the wheel.

Here 's the road, there 's the road,
Who 's on the way?

I saw Santa Claus
  Pass yesterday.

Here 's the gate, there 's the gate;
  Toc! Toc! Toc!
Don't you hear Santa Claus
  Stand there and knock?

Hurry in, scurry in,
  Come through the gate;
You 'll just see him,
  If you 're not too late!

"Where is he?" asked the fiddler, her black head coming through the neck of the gown. "Did he go?"

The potter buttoned the gown round her throat, and smoothed it down about her. "Always goes," he said; "but I 'm going to tell you some more about him, and you watch your Santa Claus girl at the wheel, and see if he comes and talks to her. I heard Santa Claus say one night, that after long, long days, when Christmas comes, he 'll bring a little bit of a wheel, if he can find any little girl that lies perfectly still at night while her papa sings."

"And can I make water-monkeys, and

pitchers, and vases, and — and everything on it, like you do?" asked the fiddler.

"Yes," said Giacomo, "if you are still, so that he brings it to you."

The fiddler crept down beside him, and lay like a mouse with her bright black eyes fixed steadily on Clothilde, while Giacomo went back to the swaying, monotonous "*Tournez encore, tournez toujours,*" until a softness stole over her face, and sleep smiled through the vigilance of her eyes.

"*Tour—nez en—core,—tour—nez tou—jours,*" — Giacomo let the words fade slowly on his lips, and nodded for Clothilde to tread more gently on the wheel. The fiddler's soft, regular breathing could be heard as the other sounds died. Her eyes were closed, her lips just parted, and her little brown hands clasped beneath her chin.

The doctor tiptoed out from his corner. Giacomo, too, had shut his eyes, and his face looked pinched with weariness. Clothilde stood with her hand resting in a friendly way right on the wheel; there was a sorrowful look on her face. It seemed so lonesome to think of Uncle Giacomo's having sung the baby to sleep like that for three years, with

nobody to see how beautifully he did it. The doctor motioned toward the doorway, and she went outside with him.

"I — er — there was something I wanted to remind you of, Santa Claus," he began, and then he put his hand on her shoulder. "We 'll have to straighten this thing out with the people round here," he said. "Your uncle is a good man. I would have spanked that little crab."

CHAPTER IV

CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE POTTER

IN the next few days the doctor said a good deal in Potosi about the potter and his baby and Clothilde. He did not say that if there was a hoodoo in the family it was the baby, although he was inclined to think so. He merely told the people that Barse was a good man, and that there was nothing unusual about his wheel, except that he took the trouble to sing songs with it to humor his spoiled baby and put her to sleep. His hearers only shook their heads, and smiled as if they knew a great deal more than the doctor did; and when he asked them what they meant, they would not explain beyond saying that Barse might be like other people when he was sick, but not when he was well. The doctor was too quick-tempered to question them very far, and he usually ended by storming out

a fair torrent of "What? What?" and marching off without waiting for their troublesome answers. His championship had the good effect, however, of making those who met Clothilde rather kindlier to her than they would have been otherwise.

Clothilde's housewifery, though free from the vice of scrubbing, was a trifle haphazard; she and the fiddler had to make frequent trips between the pottery and the butcher's and the grocer's, for they got things one at a time when they thought of them, forgetting various other needs which they soon remembered. When the two messengers from the pottery entered a street, the other children whisked out of it so quickly that it seemed as if the hot white road had absorbed them like drops of water; but grown people were quite inclined to make friends with Clothilde in a guarded way, and to ask her even more questions than the doctor wanted to ask them.

One day, Philipe Gomez, the man who had brought her down from Cypress Creek, was lounging at the grocer's when she went there, and he met her as an old acquaintance.

"'Ow is yo' uncle?" he asked, leaning to-

ward her, and speaking in a confidential voice, when the grocer had turned his back.

"He is ver' well," Clothilde answered stiffly and distinctly.

"An 'yo' 'ave seed not'ing at all of strange?"

Clothilde pulled down the fiddler, who was climbing across the counter after a cat. "I 'ave seed not'ing strange but de peopl' heah," she retorted. "I tink, me, dat de peopl' in Potosi are de mos' strange an' de most' bad people in all de world."

Gomez was not offended; he laughed at her; and the grocer, who had heard, turned around and laughed, too. "She may change her mind as to who is strange and bad," he said.

Clothilde took her bag of rice and started out with it, sweeping the baby up under one arm, to be sure where she was. "W'en I change my min'," she said, "it will be faw de t'ing I *see*, an' not faw all de terreebl' foolishness dat peopl' talk. Be good, Troululu, or I 'll put yo' on de w'eel w'en we get home an'—"

The lounging creole turned grave, and started after her. "See heah," he said, "I am a ver' good friend of yo'; I laugh, yas, w'en yo' get so mad, but I t'ink yo' a mighty

brave little girl, an' I doan' want yo' gettin' into troubl'. Yo' uncle may be like odder peopl' w'en he is sick, but as I tole yo' at de first, dat wheel is of de devil, an' doan' yo' touch it."

Clothilde straightened her head until the fiddler, who had slipped to the ground, caught hold of her braids and began to drive her. She paid no attention, she was trying to wither Gomez with her superiority. "I am learning to run de w'eel at night, me," she said.

Something which Clothilde knew as a very wicked French oath came softly out of the man's mouth. He stared at her a moment, then pulled himself together, and made the sign of the cross, and then stared again as the fiddler whipped her away.

"Yo' had ought to cross yo'self, yas, w'en yo' say a so bad word," Clothilde muttered; but she knew well enough that he had not crossed himself on account of the word, but because he was afraid of her when she said she was learning the wheel. Perhaps she felt a little bit proud to think that a grown man like that should be afraid of her, yet that night when she trod the circling measure of "*Tournez encore, tournez toujours,*" she kept remem-

bering the man's horrified face, and it made her angry, and, in her turn, afraid. She had no chance to forget it, for the next day when she went on her errands, the same look was in every pair of eyes she met, and no one who could help it spoke her a single word. After that, as she and the fiddler walked the roads, even grown people shivered away in front of them like dry leaves before a wind.

Clothilde was a friendly child, and she was used to constant sociability with what neighbors there were on Cypress Creek, so that being sent to Coventry in this way not only exasperated her, but kept alive in her a dread of she knew not what, and yet there was such a fascination about the pottery that after her first sharp resentment and nervousness wore away, she came to have a keen enjoyment of her isolation with Giacomo and the fiddler. The fiddler was as active as all her little brothers and sisters in combination, and there was not much chance to think of other people when she spent most of her time in running like a forest-fire in a gale to keep track of her little cousin; but there would have been enough to interest her even if Troululu had been a quiet baby, for Giacomo was too rest-

less himself to lie idle all day, and, with clay on a board before him, he gave hour after hour to making the most wonderful things for the children's delight.

If Troululu had been of a more passive nature, Clothilde would have been perfectly happy merely to sit still and watch her uncle's deft fingers molding, and pinching, and twisting the clay, until suddenly some unexpected animal would step right out of a formless lump, all living and perfect, it seemed to her, before she saw how much more Giacomo could do to it, and how much more alive and complete it became. The fiddler liked to watch too for a little while; but she soon tired of inaction and began making improvements on her father's work, adding extra ears and tails to the dogs, and sticking the duck's bill into the howling wolf's mouth until the two were squeezed together into the sticky lump out of which the potter had made them. Giacomo only laughed and modeled the clay into a new shape; but Clothilde would rather romp till she dropped than encourage such vandalism, so they would up and away again.

"Where's your nurse?" asked the doctor, coming in and sitting down on a big inverted

crock. There were no chairs in the pottery, for Giacomo had never been rich enough to buy them when he had so many things which would do as well.

"I think," said the potter, "that she and my fiddler are building a tower out of flower-pots back there in the yard. I heard a sort of smashing a while ago that sounded like flower-pots getting too high and toppling over."

"No value to you?" asked the doctor. He was very warm, and was fanning himself vigorously with his straw hat. August in Potosi never lets you forget that it is August.

"They may be when I have less of 'em," said the potter.

"How 's that?" the doctor said, pricking up his ears. He was very far from believing any "folderol" about Giacomo, yet Giacomo had queer ways of speaking and looking that were always setting the doctor on the alert. For the very inmost fold of the doctor's mind held the thought that somewhere there must be some kind of a reason for people's having such strange ideas. "Some fire where there 's so much smoke," was the motto wrapped round the thought.

"One of those back rooms there," said Gia-

como, "is full to the ceiling with flower-pots—just plain, round, slanting flower-pots. They won't all be sold in two life-times, here where people grow their plants mostly out of doors."

"What did you make 'em for?" asked the doctor.

"I was mad," said the potter. "It was when the baby was first born, and one day I came in and found my wife lying here and crying. You see those two big green dragons fighting on the top shelf? You 'd never guess it, but they 're flower-pots, and my wife had been lying here and looking at them, and when I asked her what the trouble was she said we 'd never have money enough to raise Louise — that 's the fiddler — if I kept on making green dragons instead of common sort of pots that people would buy. Well, it was unreasonable of me, for lying here now I 've looked at those dragons until I 'm tired of them myself,— I can see now that their necks are too long,— but to have my wife crying about 'em made me mad, an' I just drew out my wheel and rushed in on plain flower-pots. You ought to have seen how fast I got to making 'em; and I made 'em, and I baked 'em, and I stacked 'em up until, the day before the fiddler was

christened, I found my wife crying again. She said she did n't see how the baby would ever have a chance to play if all the rooms in the pottery were stacked full of pots."

"Huh!" said the doctor, sympathetically.

"I 've been mighty sorry for my wife since I 've been lying here," Giacomo said. "I don't believe, though, I ever did another thing in my life to spite her, and I made that all right with her, too."

"How?" the doctor questioned.

"Why, I told her we 'd just let the baby play with the pots until she broke enough to make room for herself. My wife got to laughing over that, and we never had any more disagreements at all. But if things in heaven are fixed so that she can look down and see what a hole Troululu is making in them she must be mighty happy about it. It was those pots that first got me into the habit of working nights, and then, little as she was, the fiddler took a fancy to seeing me, and so I 've kept it up. How long do you suppose it 'll be, doctor, before I can get at my wheel again?"

"Several weeks yet," the doctor answered.

"Well, but I can't stand that, you know,"

said Giacomo. "Since I 've been here so still my head has simply swarmed with new shapes I want to try; they go along in front of me like a procession all the while. I tell you if I don't have a chance to work some of them off on the wheel, something 's going to break.— Oh, Clothilde!"

The door opened promptly, and Clothilde put her head in. There was a flower-pot on top of her head, and she looked like Joan of Arc. "W'at yo' want, Uncle Giacomo?" she asked.

Giacomo had lifted himself on his elbow, and his black eyes were full of excited purpose. "You just draw that wheel up as close as you can get it to me," he began; "and, doctor, would you mind helping me to shift over to the edge of the bed? And you, Troululu, let go of Clothilde's dress and show me your goodness; I 'm going to work. Now, Clothilde, that 's right, bring over a big lump of clay,— do you see, you 're going to be my feet and stand and tread for me, and I 'll reach over and make such things as you never saw in your life."

"What? what?" cried the doctor. "I don't know about that." But nevertheless he

helped Giacomo toward the edge of the bed and then drew away to watch.

Giacomo sat up. A bright spot came into each of his cheeks, he pushed the disordered mane back from his forehead, draped his moustache over his ears, and leaned forward reaching out his long thin hands for the clay. It was in good condition, for Clothilde had kept it moistened under his direction. At first he kneaded and shaped it lovingly, then dropped it on the center of the wheel. He had few tools, and what he had he scarcely used, but placed his two hands on the whirling clay and forced it up between them into a cylinder, now pushing in his hands toward the base; now toward the top, to make a bulging form; now pressing it down into cozy squat lines; now lifting and inspiring it into slender curves. He was romping with his skill. The clay seemed to live as he handled it, and his eyes grew brighter and brighter as the ideas that he had been hoarding crowded to his supple finger tips.

Clothilde and the doctor watched him silently, and Clothilde did not dare to look across at the doctor, for the potter's joy in his wheel made her shrink at heart. But Trou-

lulu crept beneath the corner of the bed and bobbed up between Clothilde and her father like a toy on springs. Giacomo dropped the clay and looked down at her, opening his arms to let her come still nearer him.

"I did n't knock down the tower and break all your pots on purpose, Papa," she declared; "I did it unfortunately, because my bad Santa Claus girl made them so high I could n't reach. My Santa Claus girl was bad and I was good, — see my goodness!"

Her queer little face gathered itself into its most alluring smile. The potter bent and kissed her. "That 's a good Troululu!" he said. "My little fiddler is the best of all the girls."

"Yes," the doctor muttered to Clothilde, "she 's afraid now of the pint cup. Smart child — the little crab."

But Clothilde was thinking of other things. "Is Uncle Giacomo well," she asked, "dat yo' let him run de w'eel?"

CHAPTER V

A WHITE GLOW IN THE DARK

IN the night Clothilde was startled from her sleep by a banging of doors and chattering of windows. A great wind was sweeping round the pottery, and sheets of rain washed against it. Just as she wakened, a twisting dart of lightning cut the night in two with a crash, and showed her the storm. Clothilde buried her face in the pillows and stuffed her fingers in her ears, but there are so many dreadful things which may happen when one's ears are closed that pretty soon she drew her fingers partly away and listened. The windows had not ceased struggling, and the rain dashed like hail against them; but the intense darkness was unbroken. The lightning had been one of those sharp, single bolts which sometimes

come in a storm and seem to have a special purpose in their coming.

As she lay there, no longer exactly afraid, but very lonely in the passionate, black night, Clothilde remembered the sound of slamming which had first awakened her. The wind must have opened one of the doors, for she had fastened them all before she went to bed. She got up silently and slipped into her dress. She was glad to have some reason for going into her uncle's room, where the little lamp would be shedding a soft fantasy of light and shade across the pottery-strewn floor to the crowded walls. She had put the lamp on a shelf, in the middle of a row of puzzle mugs, now that the wheel had been drawn up so close to her uncle's bed. She smiled as she recalled that first night when her heart had knocked with fear at all the lurking shapes in the room. They had become so familiar that even without her uncle and the fiddler they would be reassurance.

Though the beating of the rain covered every sound she made, she went tip-toeing to the door and opened it inch by inch to be very sure of not awakening the fiddler, who had a way of starting up at the creak of hinges, or

even at the gentle plash of bare feet on the floor, though she was evidently sleeping through the storm. Clothilde caught her breath tremulously as the door moved under her hand, for it was opening into darkness.

"Wind blowed de lamp out," she told herself. She opened a little further, and there came a faint light from another direction than the lamp. "But!" she murmured, and softly flung wide the door.

A weird pale vision filled the center of the room. Her uncle's face was lifted from the bed, and bent with shadowy eyes upon the wheel, and the wheel shone. A light came from it and spread up toward her uncle's face and dimly out into the darkness. It was a still, strange light that seemed to live upon the wheel, and the wheel lived, too, and turned swiftly and noiselessly with no foot to tread it, and her uncle reached his long, thin hands down toward the cold, living brightness, and moved them in and out as if he were shaping something out of the half-lighted air. His face smiled above his hands.

Clothilde thought she was crying out, but the words whispered between her lips. She could not stir, nor do anything but look at the

shining wheel, and at her uncle's white, white face, with the great black shadows for his eyes. Her heart stood so still that when at last it bounded to its work, the first beat was an unexpected blow, and she almost fell. She clung to the casing of the doorway, while her breath came hard and quick, and her head whirled like the white whirling thing that she saw though she had clenched her eyes. Suddenly she gathered herself together and made the sign of the cross as the man had done. Then she closed the door even more carefully than she had opened it, ran across to her own window, flung it up, and dropped outside. The wind and the rain caught her and swept her with them through the wildness of the night.

It was a long time before she began to wonder where she was. On every side of her, against the dark, she saw her uncle's face and the ghostly, shining wheel. She shuddered from head to foot as she thought how she had turned it, and rested her hand on it, and boasted that she could run it, and been angry with the man who said it was of the devil. She had even threatened to put the baby on it and make her into a pint cup. The baby! Giacomo sang her to sleep with the devil's

wheel, and she must often and often have wakened in the night and seen it shine like that and not have been afraid.

Such a great sorrow came aching into Clothilde's throat, such a longing for her mother, and all her little brothers and sisters, who had never been sung to sleep to the whir of a shining wheel, that all the strength of fear went out of her, and she took a few uncertain steps, groping in the dark. There was a fence at the side of the road; in reaching about her she touched it, and, as if it were some sort of protection, she sank down beside it, drenched, shivering, and crying as if her heart would break.

The more she cried, the more the hot tears surged up into her eyes. She loved her uncle, she loved the baby, she loved the queer old pottery. She had even come to love the wheel — and they all belonged to wickedness and mystery, for the wheel shone by itself in the dark. The people were right, and her uncle was a hoodoo — the own husband of her own aunt was a bad man, who made things do what they could not do, and brought bad luck. It was true that he had been like other people while he had been sick, but now that he had

grown well enough to touch the wheel, the wheel had begun to run without treading, and to shine like the moon through mist. After a while she put out her arms to the fence and hugged herself close to it, and wondered what her mama would say when she knew that Uncle Giacomo was a hoodoo, and if her mama would scold her for running away and leaving a hoodoo with a broken leg all alone in the night.

When she thought of Giacomo's broken leg, it made her remember the doctor, and a rush of comfort went through her. She would go to the doctor's house, and tell the doctor all about it, and get him to send her back to Cypress Creek. But no, she could see her mama's bright eyes look scornful, and could hear her say: "So yo' had de fear to be hurt. Yo' have not grow so *grande* as I t'ought yo' had, po' littl' Clothilde!" Yes, her mama would say something like that, for way up on Cypress Creek, where every one was good, nobody would believe that the own husband of an own sister was a hoodoo. But then Clothilde could find the doctor, and take him with her to look softly in and see the wheel, and perhaps he could make her mama believe. She could

almost feel his warm hand on her shoulder, and she knew what he would say to her when she told him; it would be: "What? What? Well, Santa Claus, I reckon I 'd better look in and see that wheel."

The thought of the doctor made Clothilde ashamed to have run so far, and cried so long like a senseless thing in the dark. She felt warm and brave again, and she jumped to her feet, and strained her eyes for anything to tell her where she was. The blackness was utterly without form. Her feet could feel the hard road, and sometimes as she weaved to one side in following it her hand found a fence, sometimes only trees, once or twice the wall of a house. She crept back from the houses, for she was far too proud to take refuge with any one but the doctor. She was so completely bewildered that she did not know whether she had turned toward the pottery or away from it, so she could only follow along the road, and hope to come against something that she knew.

The road carried her up a great many little hills and down into a great many little valleys where small noisy streams of rain-water poured curling across her feet. She had gone hither

and yonder in Potosi, but all of her errands had carried her over level ground, and if she had noticed the hills she would have known that every step was taking her farther from the pottery and from the doctor; but it happens that Cypress Creek runs through a broken country, and the little rises and descents of the road felt so natural that she thought nothing about them, and only wondered if she would ever come to anything that she knew, or if morning was going to be very much longer in breaking through the dark. It had stopped raining, but not a star crept out into the night to keep her company. Even her vision of Giacomo and the wheel faded out; she was too tired to be afraid, she was only heartsick and helpless, and all alone in a great dense blackness that would not let her go.

She plodded up yet another hill and stopped sharply at the top. There was light in front of her, pale shimmering ranks of light shot through with sudden stars. She stood and gazed, her head lifted and her hands clenched. As far as her eyes could search, the white troops were hurrying toward her like vague star-jeweled ghosts. Clothilde watched and listened, stiff with fear. She thought that

they were the same as the shining of the wheel, though down below her each one broke into a million pearls, shattering itself with a long moaning sough.

It was Pontomoc Bay that stretched before her, with its phosphorescent breakers rolling in upon the beach. Suddenly Clothilde knew it and struck her hands together. "It is de sea, de sea!" she cried aloud; "an de *bon Dieu* make de light! Oh, sure, sure! Father Henri tole me dat de *bon Dieu* make de light! — An' dat is de way wid de w'eel," she thought on eagerly. "It is not dat Uncle Giacomo is bad dat de light come faw him, it is because he is so good to de baby dat de *bon Dieu* sends light to his w'eel on de dark nights w'en de win' blows out de lamp, jus' de way dat brightness comes to de waves of de sea w'en de stars is hid. I wish I had de sense of dat littl' fiddler who mus' have seed de w'eel many, many times in de night, an ' has never had de t'ought to be afraid."

It was so good to believe in her uncle again that Clothilde forgot that she was alone and wet and tired and did not know her way. The pottery must be somewhere at the other end of the long road that she had come, and

perhaps it would be morning soon. She turned a happy face back into the darkness, and groped her steps sturdily until a few stars came out, and then the east turned gray. She saw where she was, and flew like a bird along the deserted streets. Her window was open just as she had left it. She climbed in noiselessly, and went to her uncle's door and listened. There was not a sound to be heard, so she took off her wet clothing and covered herself up in bed, where she fell asleep and dreamed many strange things until the sun was high and the little fiddler was climbing up beside her.

"Hands, don't touch Clothilde," the fiddler was saying as she patted Clothilde's face. "You must be good, little hands, and not wake up my Clothilde, 'cause my Clothilde is so good."

Clothilde opened her eyes and drew the little fiddler into her arms and hugged her tight. "Yo', Troululu," she said; and the fiddler printed a great big ecstatic kiss upon her cheek.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIDDLER'S LITTLE ANGELS

AFTER Troululu had wakened Clothilde she went back to get her handful of garments. Clothilde slipped into her own dress, and went into her uncle's room before the little night-gowned figure had returned.

"What for did you put on a fresh dress? I want a fresh dress!" the fiddler cried at sight of her.

Clothilde blushed, wishing that anything was ever unnoticed by those quick eyes. The clothing she had worn the night before was still wet from the rain. "In co'se yo' shall have a fresh dress," she answered. "I t'ought it was time, me, dat we be mo' clean. I 'ave always hear dat Santa Claus like bes' de cleanes' littl' girls."

"But his little angels are not clean," said

Troululu. "They come down the chimney with him and they get so *b-black*. Last night I dreamed that three, four, nine, little angels came down the chimney, and they had to turn themselves — so — and shake off the black."

"But it is not Santa Claus who has the little angels," Clothilde corrected eagerly, "it is de *bon Dieu*."

"Who is the *bon Dieu?*" asked Troululu.

Clothilde looked across at her uncle.

"The *bon Dieu* lives in heaven, and takes care of all the little angels, Troululu," the potter answered smiling; "but I think he lends some of them to Santa Claus, Santa Claus is so good."

Clothilde puckered her eyebrows. Her mother and Father Henri had taught her all about the *bon Dieu* and the angels, and her mother had told her about Santa Claus twice — *le petit Noël*, they called him. She had told her first when she was very little, and then again in a less delightful way when she had grown "more *grande*"; this mixing him up with the *bon Dieu* and the angels was very puzzling to her, but Troululu was jumping up and down with an ecstatic face, and there was not much time to think about it.

"I 'm going to be good, good, good!" the fiddler cried, "and then I 'll go to the chimney and I 'll ask the *bon Dieu* and Santa Claus to lend me some of their little angels, and then when you want Clothilde to turn the wheel I 'll play with my little angels, and they 'll not run away, and we 'll be good, good, good, and I 'll not pull their hair, and when I want them to do anything I 'll say 'Thank you,' and 'If you please!'"

"That 's a very good idea," said the potter.

Just then the doctor came in. "Tell him, Papa," whispered the fiddler, "tell him about my little angels."

"She 's going to be good, good, good, doctor," said Giacomo, "so that the little angels of Santa Claus will come and play with her."

The doctor gave one of his sharp, downward glances at the fiddler. She was still in her little white gown, and she was looking shyly up at him through her black elf locks. "Tell him," she whispered again, "that I won't pull their hair, and I 'll say 'Thank you,' and 'If you please!'"

"Hu-uh," said the doctor softly, "what 's got into the little crab?"

"Just her goodness," said Giacomo; "it

strikes in like that sometimes. Never mind dressing her till you 've made the coffee, Clothilde; I was awake a good deal in the storm, and I 'm most starved for some."

As Clothilde started for the kitchen Troululu looked wistfully at the long tangled braid hanging down her back. "What for is your hair all wet?" she cried suddenly.

Clothilde was just outside the open door, and she pretended not to hear; but the doctor muttered, "What?" and looked after her and frowned. Then he turned impatiently to the potter. "You 've tired yourself out," he said. "I knew how it would be when I saw how you marched on that wheel yesterday. There 's this much about it, Barse: if you don't want to work yourself into a fever and be tied up here a lot of extra weeks, you must put the brakes on this restlessness of yours. And there 's more than your getting well to be thought of. No one ever seems to be within shouting distance of this pottery when help is needed, and yet if there was an eye at the window all the time it could n't see more than they all seem to know of what 's going on here; and I 'll tell you this, Potosi folks don't think it looks well for a man with a broken

leg to have any desire to work. I believe they 'll make it troublesome for you if you don't lie quiet."

The bright red spots which had come into Giacomo's cheeks the day before flamed sharply out of his pallor. He gave his mustache a twist above his ears. "I 'll work when I please, and how I please, if all the crazy fools in Potosi stand night and day at my window," he cried. "No,— you 've treated me as a good man treats a human being, doctor, and I don't forget it, but you can't tell me what they say or that they 'll make trouble for me, if you want me to keep quiet. I 'll get up leg and all, and I 'll fight the whole miserable cowardly outfit that never tells me what it has against me, but would leave me and my helpless baby alone here to die if it was n't for you and for that one little girl, that 's worth all the people in forty Potosis. Have n't they talked to her too! Have n't I seen the look on her face when she came in sometimes! And not a word has she said, and not a word have I dared ask her, for I knew that if she told me I 'd go wild like this, and it would set me back. But when I get well I 'll go out among them, and — after that

— I 'll take my fiddler — " His voice had grown hoarse, but his cheeks and eyes burned clear. He put his hand to his throat, and sank back against his pillows. " Great heavens, doctor," he said, " do you think I 'm going to keep on living in this hole, where other children run from my child as if she was an ill omen, and all the pleasure of her little life has to come from the harmless lies I tell her, and the beautiful fancies of her little head, that I have n't the heart to say are just lies too ? I may be queer and cranky and half cracked, as they used to call me, and I may care more for my own thoughts and the working of them into clay than I care for other people,— common people,— but when it comes to my child — "

The doctor put a warm firm hand onto the cold shaking ones which Giacomo had gripped together above the bed-clothes. " There, I know ; that 'll do, Barse," he said. " I hear the children coming back with the coffee." He stepped out into the little yard which separated the kitchen from the pottery. " Take the cup to your uncle," he told Clothilde, " and then leave the fiddler with him and come back here. I want to talk to you." He paused an instant undecidedly, and then

lifted Troululu up between his hands. "Little crab," he asked, "are you going to stay with papa, and tell him all about your little angels?"

"Yes," the fiddler cried, with her goodness still shining from her face, "and I 'm going to get him to tell Santa Claus and the *bon Dieu* that I want three, four, nine little angels all with their fresh dresses on, and Santa Claus must n't let them get black in the chimney. Won't you tell him, doctor, you and papa and Clothilde all tell him not to let them get black in the chimney!"

"That 's right," said the doctor; "and remember not to pull their hair." He set her down, and she flew ahead of Clothilde, calling:

"Four, six, nine little angels, Papa; I want nine!"

Clothilde came back in a moment. "I t'nk," she said, solemnly, "dat de angel 'as truly come, somesing make dat child so ver' good."

"Lucky," said the doctor. "But what I want to ask you is why you were outside last night in the storm?"

His brows were bent together, and he looked both stern and troubled. Clothilde gave a little gasp. "In de stohm?" she echoed. "What make yo' know?"

"Your hair," said the doctor, "and people. I did n't believe the people till I saw the hair. What foolery were you up to, getting your uncle into more trouble?"

Clothilde did not say anything for a long time, and her head drooped until its wet tangled mane fell across her cheeks. "I was n' foolin' no way, me," she said, at last; "but 'ow did peopl' know?"

"Saw you," returned the doctor. "Philipe Gomez said he saw you running along the road from the beach in the gray light this morning, and last night his schooner anchored out in the bay was struck by lightning, and he lays it to you."

Clothilde lifted her face with her black eyes wide and full of horror, but she could not say a word.

The doctor was sorry for her and put his hand on her shoulder. "You know I don't believe such folderol," he said, "not any more than I believe that your uncle's wheel lighted itself up last night,—that's another thing Gomez said,—but I want you to tell me just what possessed you to go outside at all. I never thought to warn you not to do a thing like that because—why who 'd think of a

child's going out alone at night? And then I supposed you had more sense. You see it 's this way, little Santa Claus: these people here are superstitious; I mean that they believe in ghosts and hoodoos and all sorts of rubbish, and they 've got it fast in their heads that your uncle and his wheel together can make any sort of bad luck that they please, and since you 've told that you can run the wheel they think about the same of you, so the minute you do anything queer they 're sure you 're up to mischief. Did n't you understand all that?"

"Yas," Clothilde said slowly, "I knowed it."

"Then what in creation took you out in the dark and the rain?"

Clothilde hesitated again. It seemed as if it would do more harm than good to tell what she had seen, but the doctor kept looking at her and she was ashamed not to meet his eyes. "I was skeered of de wheel," she said in a low, constrained voice.

The doctor's hand fell from her shoulder and a muscle in his cheek jerked with vexation. "She 's just a creole like the rest," he thought. "What *skeered* you?" he asked.

The tone hurt Clothilde. She drew herself

up and pushed the hair back over her shoulders. "I was skeered," she said, "because de w'eel *do* shine by itse'f in de night."

"Stuff!" said the doctor, looking at her sharply.

"It shine by itse'f in de night," Clothilde repeated with dogged firmness. "I know, 'cause de stroke of de t'under woke me; dere was n' but one an' I was in my bed. De win' was blowin' so hard I got up to see if Uncle Giacomo was all right, an' I opened de door softly not to wake 'im, an' dere was de w'eel. It was shinin' like de white moon an' it was turnin' by itse'f, an' Uncle Giacomo—oh, Uncle Giacomo look so strange, an' all I could t'ink me, was 'ow de people said dat it was of de devil, an' I ran. I dropped out de window an' I ran an' ran an' I did 'n know w'ere I went, an' everyt'ing was black ontil I came to de sea. It was shinin' like de w'eel, an' den I remember w'at Father Henri tell me dat de *bon Dieu* gave de light to de sea 'cause he say dere mus' be light, an' I knowed it was jus' de same way wid de w'eel. An' I'm goin' to tell everybody dat it is jus' cause Uncle Giacomo is so good dat de *bon Dieu* lets 'im 'ave de light on his w'eel in de black night w'en de win' blow out de lamp."

The doctor breathed very softly to himself. "Well," he said, "if there 's bound to be a light on the wheel it 's healthier to have the *bon Dieu* put it there than the devil, but it 's queer it never does any of its shining for me."

"Yo' ain't never seed it w'en de win' blowed out de lamp," Clothilde answered stiffly.

"That 's so, Santa Claus, that 's so," the doctor said, "and I 'm glad you 've decided it 's the *bon Dieu;* but if you ever have a chance to ask Barse about it without exciting him, just remember every word he says and tell me. You 'll do that much, won't you, to help me straighten this thing out?"

"In co'se I will," Clothilde answered, happy to be obliging, "but dere is not'ing of crookedness to make straight; now I know how de w'eel can shine w'en my uncle is so good an' is de one person in de world w'at never scold nobody."

"Huh!" said the doctor, and went suddenly back into the pottery. Giacomo made a motion for him to be quiet.

The fiddler had her head in the fireplace, and was peering up. "Thank you, Santa Claus," she called, "thank you very much for their fresh dresses; I 'll be very careful to keep them clean." She drew her head out like

a flash, and caught sight of the doctor. "Don't step on my little angels!" she cried. "Don't you see them? — three, four, nine of them right by your feet, putting away my flower-pots?"

The doctor looked this way and that, and made a dive for the outer door. "Between crabs and angels and wheels that shine like the sea! —" he muttered. "Like the sea," he repeated, pausing. "There 's an idea in that."

CHAPTER VII

THE REBUILDING OF TRASCAN

CLOTHILDE'S heart ached with the thought that she and the doctor had almost quarrelled, and that he did not believe what she told him, and she was weighted down with the knowledge that Philipe Gomez said she had made the lightning strike his boat. It had never seemed so awful to hear other people, even Uncle Giacomo, called "Hoodoo," as to have it brought home to herself. She felt too small and helpless and ignorant to be mixed up in that way with things of which the *bon Dieu* usually took all the charge. Who was Clothilde Rousselle from far up Cypress Creek, to be taking the lightning out of the hands of the *bon Dieu* and sending it against the schooner of Philipe Gomez? For a moment she shivered and buried her face in her arms, while

the sobs rose in her throat and she wished Father Henri would come down and tell those wicked Potosi people that she did not even know how the *bon Dieu* sent the lightning into the sky, for when she had asked Father Henri, he had told her that as long as the *bon Dieu* sent it, it was good to have it there, and that she did not need to know how it came. Father Henri and her mother, — the very names were a great, quivering pain, just as they had been last night, and all her thoughts broke into a confusion of longing for her own, loving, reverent people, who would never believe such wicked things about the *bon Dieu* and about her, and who would know it was the truth when she said that the wheel shone in the dark, because her uncle was so good.

"Oh, I want to go home," she moaned half aloud, crushing herself against the wall to ease the cruelty of homesickness, "I — want — to go — *home*."

Just then her uncle called her. She brushed her hands, and then her sleeves across her eyes, gave her dress a shake, and went in.

"Don't you reckon it's time the fiddler had a dress on?" Giacomo asked. He was lying back in bed, tapping restlessly on his empty

coffee-cup with his spoon. He saw the marks of sorrow on Clothilde's face, and he looked away, tapping a livelier measure. He needed a little more strength before he tried to console her; just now he would only work himself into another passion.

"Come, Troululu," said Clothilde.

The fiddler had a small wet cloth, and was scrubbing up the soot that had spattered down the chimney in the night. "I 'm not Troululu, I 'm a little angel," she said. "Don't trouble me."

"Come, little angel," said Clothilde, wearily, "I have a fresh dress for you."

The fiddler lifted an imaginary drapery from the side of her scant sooty gown. "See my fresh dress that Santa Claus gave me?" she said. "You only have little Troululu's dress, and Troululu 's gone. I saw her running far off."

"Come, come," said the potter, "that 's a beautiful way to play, but when Clothilde says to come and be dressed you must go. You can play that Santa Claus is putting a new fresh dress on you — Clothilde is your Santa Claus girl, you know. Go along."

"I won't," said the fiddler, looking with

critical pleasure at the blackness of her rag. "I 'm busy. That 's the way little angels talk; they say, 'I won't — don't trouble me.'"

"*Trou*lulu!" Clothilde gasped. It seemed too much after the fiddler's morning had begun so beautifully that she should fall into what Giacomo always called "her queer ideas," for when one of them entered her head it always stayed a long time. Clothilde was so tired that her heart felt less pleased with the fiddler than it had ever felt before. "Troululu," she said again, controlling her impatience, "w'at 'as gone wid all yo' goodness?"

The fiddler looked up and around her curiously. "There it is," she finally said, pointing to one of the high shelves. "I saw it crawl into that little wee, wee water monkey, and it can't get out."

"Get down that water monkey, Clothilde," Giacomo said with decision. "The fiddler must take her goodness out of it. I 'll not have goodness stored away on a top shelf when it 's so mighty scarce in the world. Do you understand that, Troululu?"

"I don't hear you, papa," the fiddler said. "I 'm a little angel."

Clothilde climbed after the olla. With its

small opening to pour the water in, and its tiny puncture for drinking the water out, it seemed altogether reasonable that anything as solid as goodness should find hard work to escape when once inside. A smile was playing round the corners of Clothilde's mouth as she picked her way down from the shelf and handed Troululu the queerly shaped jar. It was just the right size to keep a doll's drinking water cool and refreshing, and the opening to drink from was no bigger than the point of a pin. The fiddler put her eye to the larger hole.

"My goodness is in there," she announced. "Oh, you bad *méchant* goodness, get out! Get out! Get out! — Papa, it won't come out. See how I shake the monkey, and it won't come out! I can't be dressed while my goodness won't come out."

The potter's black eyes kindled and he draped his mustache behind his ears. It was strange that the very morning when he was planning to defy all Potosi for the sake of the fiddler should be the first morning of her life when his hands would have consented to spanking her. "That 's about enough," he said, looking at her steadily. "Wherever

your goodness is, let me see it this instant on your face, and then go to Clothilde and be dressed."

"But it won't come ow-out," the fiddler wailed, giving him sidelong glances as she stood stamping her bare feet and shaking the olla wrathfully toward the floor. Clothilde watched with a catch in her breath, wondering if after all these weeks her uncle was going to ask her to bring the fiddler to him for punishment. The fiddler was bad, undoubtedly she was very bad; but Clothilde shrank from the thought of a spanking on top of all their other troubles. Troululu swung the olla up and down and shook it with all her strength. Genuine fury had come into her voice, and she screamed, "It 's bad, bad, *méchant* goodness, and it *won't* come out!" Suddenly the olla flew from her hands, and, striking a hard earthen alligator that was lurking near the wall, flew into a thousand flecks of clay.

"W'at!" Clothilde broke out in a high shocked voice, "yo' call yo'se'f a angel an' yo' do dat!"

"I 'm not an angel," said the fiddler timidly, "I 'm just Troululu." There was a moment of absolute silence while she gazed

reproachfully at the fragments on the floor. Then an enchanting sweetness came into her face. She made one of her swift darts, captured nothing but thin air, and held it out between her thumb and finger like a prize. "Here 's my goodness! See!" she cried. "I found it! See me put it on my face! And the little bad water monkey is all smashed so my goodness can't get in there any more, and you 'll see it all the days on my face — all the weary days." She went up close to her father. "What does it mean, Papa, 'weary days'? and what does it mean 'weary nights'? I hear you say that sometimes, 'weary days and weary nights.' Tell me what it means?"

She was looking into his face, her naughtiness, and even her rapturous goodness, all forgotten in earnest questioning. He drew her up beside him. "My baby, my baby," he said softly, as he looked into her bright, wide eyes, "I wish you would n't ever know."

"Won't I know when I 'm big?" the fiddler persisted. "That 's what you said before you called Clothilde. I heard you say it, Papa: 'weary days and weary nights.' Do you talk that way 'cause you have a broken leg?"

"Yes," Giacomo answered, "that 's about the size of it; I reckon I talk that way cause I 've got a broken leg."

"I t'ink dat Trascan 'ave say it too," said Clothilde. She was passing the time while she waited for Troululu by giving Trascan his seeds and water.

"He 's not going to say it any more," said Giacomo. "He 's going to be in luck, for the doctor told me I could make him his new leg to-day. Poor old fellow, the angels of Santa Claus made me forget about him, but now, when Troululu has her fresh dress, I 'm going to make him a fresh leg. Skip now, Troululu, Trascan 's talking over there to tell you that he is tired of waiting."

Clothilde held out her arms, the fiddler jumped into them from the bed, and all the angels of Santa Claus seemed to be helping, — the dress was on so quickly, the children's breakfast made, and some bits of wood, a pen-knife, soft cords, and fine wires laid on the potter's little work-board; last of all Clothilde brought Trascan and held him where he could look on. He nestled in her hand, but his eyes followed Giacomo alertly, as if he knew what the sharp little knife was shaping from the

wood. Troululu sat on a pillow at her father's elbow and bent her head between him and the knife. Once in a while she drew back out of the way when he told her he would have to make her into a pint cup, but in a moment her head was down again. Giacomo realized that she had grown older in the few weeks of his sickness, and that the threat which had seen so much service was outworn.

"I 'll have to wait and do it to-night when you are asleep, Troululu," he declared as a new resort, and the fiddler edged away several inches, and though her head kept leaning over she drew it back once or twice of her own accord, and the potter smiled as he worked and said to himself that she was the best child in the world.

The sea breeze began to stir through the warm air of the morning, the sunshine glinted in through the fantastic figures in the pottery windows, and once in a while a cart rattled past along the hard, white road. "There," Giacomo said, holding a short, slender wooden peg up to the light, and turning it round and round with a severe eye for its dimensions, "hand the old chap over and let me see if this fits him."

Trascan cocked his black eyes in attention while Giacomo tenderly bound, and strapped, and fastened the fresh leg to what misfortune had left him of the old. Then he was turned right side up, and they all laughed at the visible start with which he recognized the new support under him. It was a little too long, and he hitched up one wing, and chirped critically as he tried to take a step. He began to peck at the new leg and its fastenings.

"Never mind, never mind," said the potter. "Just give me time, old fellow, and my name's not Giacomo if I don't make it right." He laid the bird down again, and began readjusting the straps and shortening the little peg. "And, besides, Trascan," he went on, "I haven't told you that when I get it fitted I 'm going to make toes for it. Of course, you think a new leg without any toes is a pretty poor present to give a bird. There, is that more like?"

The tiny wooden leg was tried, and re-fitted, and re-tried until it reached a perfection which seemed satisfactory to Trascan, then Giacomo added some wire-claws, and Trascan perked his head on one side, and hopped a few steps rather uncertainly and stiffly, but with evident

pride. Suddenly the full knowledge of his renewal came to him. He spread his wings and circled round and round the room like a gleam of yellow light, perching at last on the sill of the open window to sing out the whole shrill rejoicing of his heart. The caged birds in the yard were quick to answer him, and the fiddler jumped up and down, adding her sweet, piercing laugh to the carnival of life and gladness.

"No limp in his wings or his voice," said Giacomo, leaning forward to watch the pulsing of song in his throat. "Put his cage outside with the door open, Clothilde. He 'll be glad to go in and rest pretty soon, but we 'll leave him his liberty while he wants it. Poor old boy, I never saw anybody so happy in my life. No, no, Troululu, don't startle him."

The fiddler was stealing up toward the window like a kitten. "I 'm not doing anything," she said, "I just want to take him in my hand so as to hear what he 's saying."

"No, no, not now!" the potter cried, and Clothilde made a dash toward the fiddler. The fiddler escaped with a squeal, and Trascan took flight through the window into the radiant sunshine.

"Troululu!" said the potter.

"That does n't matter," the fiddler answered cheerfully; "he 's just flying over the fence. He 'll come back pretty soon and say, 'Thank you, Papa, I like my fresh leg very much!'"

Clothilde went outside. "'E 'as lighted in de top of a fig-tree in de empty yard," she called back. "Oh, bud it is strange de way he fall from de limb wid his beautiful leg, an' den fly roun' an' roun' an' try again. Ah, bud 'e has de patience, dat Trascan, an', yas, he 'as already improve ver' much, he balance more true. Bud I t'ink, me, it is ingratitude to balance in some odder yard. Shall I climb de fence an' skeer 'im back?"

"No, no, leave him be," said Giacomo, "he 'll come all right. He was frightened at Troululu for a minute, but he knows who his friends are. Let him have his fill of freedom for this day."

"I should t'ink 'e would remember him 'boud dat cat," said Clothilde. "Dat is de yard of de cat."

"Better keep watch through the fence, then," said Giacomo, "and if the cat comes in sight you can climb over and drive Trascan

home. He 'll come of his own accord soon, depend on him."

The children kept faithful watch, their round eyes first at one and then at another of the long, glimmering cracks between the palings; but the cat did not come, and Trascan continued to experiment with his little wire toes on the twigs of the alien fig-trees, and though he sang cheerfully, and made great progress in balancing, he showed no thought of coming home. Perhaps he had noticed just how few ripe figs were left on the trees in the potter's yard since Clothilde came. Trascan was a wise bird, and very fond of figs himself. Whenever he was firmly balanced he encouraged himself by pecking one.

The doctor stopped in on his way home from his morning round of visits and found the house and the potter as still as he could wish. "This is sense, Barse," he said, "this is sense." There was scarcely a thing that needed to be done, and he marched nervously about the room, taking down one piece of pottery and then another, as he always did when the baby was not in the way. "Queer place you have here, Barse," he said, once in a while, "queer place." By-and-by he took a

strong crock and climbed on it to reach an upper shelf where there was a pottery basket, made like a coiling snake. While he was peering about among some dusty pots back of the basket, he spoke again in a matter-of-fact way to the potter. "I heard something that interested me about your wheel," he said. "Two or three people tell me they 've seen it shine in the dark. It set me to wondering if you rubbed phosphorus on it."

"No,' said Giacomo, simply; "I painted it with luminous paint."

"Luminous paint?" cried the doctor, turning square round and almost falling from the crock before he could step from it. "What 's luminous paint?"

"You make it by heating powdered oyster shells and sulphur together in something air-tight," Giacomo answered, looking pleased. "They combine into a stuff that has the trick of shining in the dark, after the sun has shone on it, and you mix that stuff with varnish, and you have luminous paint. I happened to get hold of a paper one time that told about its being made and used on match-boxes, so that when you went into a room at night you 'd see the match-box first thing, and the

paper thought it would be a good thing to use on danger buoys at sea, and it popped into my head at once that it would be a great scheme to have some on the wheel. You see I 've always had a hankering to use every sort of paint I ever heard of, and about that time I was spending hour after hour at night, running my wheel and singing to the fiddler, — seemed as if there never was such a child not to sleep, after her mother died. She would have the lamp lighted, and the brightness kept her awake, and I thought the soft glow they said this paint gave out would be just the thing to quiet her, and so it was. Having my furnace for the pottery, it was n't much trouble to make it, either, and when it gets smeared with the clay I put on a fresh coat. I suppose you 've never seen it shining, because since I 've been sick I 've always kept a lamp at night."

The doctor was standing by the wheel, and looking from it to Giacomo, and back again, as if he had never seen either of them before. "What?" he exclaimed, "you did a thing like that and did n't tell anybody?"

A flush came over the potter's face, and he gave a little laugh. "To tell the truth," he said, "I was n't so used to having folks down

on me as I am now, and I 'd been hacked so much for the way I painted the pottery and the handcart, and a lot of other things, that I said nothing about this. I knew they 'd make a lot of crazy jokes and fasten some sort of a nickname on me that I would n't want the fiddler to hear when she grew up, and so I kept this to myself. It did n't show queer by daylight, and there was no one but the fiddler and me to see it at night. They called me 'Rainbow Barse' when I painted the house. I reckon they 'd have called me 'Moony,' if they had seen the wheel."

The doctor looked at him half laughing, half pitying. Giacomo met the look steadily, and his eyes began to question the doctor's.

"Oh, you 've been a precious fool," the doctor said. "You did n't want to be called names, did you? And what sort of a name do you suppose they 're calling you now for the fiddler to grow up and hear? And the worst of it is that you can begin now and go on until doomsday telling these people that you 've painted your wheel with 'luminous paint,' and they 'll go on believing that your paint and your wheel and you are all 'of the devil.' You *have* been a precious fool."

Giacomo leaned back against his pillow. He was very white and he said nothing for a long time.

"Well?" the doctor challenged him.

"They think I 'm a hoodoo," Giacomo said, between his flattened lips. "That 's what they 've been telling Clothilde, is it?"

"Yes, that 's what they 've told her," the doctor said, "and they 're beginning to think she 's one, too. But she 's got something better than they have now. She saw your wheel last night, and at first it scared her, and then she made up her plucky little mind that the *bon Dieu* put the light there because you are so good."

The potter smiled faintly. "I wish you 'd call her in here," he said.

"She 'll not believe in your precious paint, any more than the rest of them will," the doctor said as he went to the door. He was feeling more exasperated than relieved by the potter's simple explanation of a mystery which he had hoped to hear denied. If the wheel really shone, then Barse could never make a soul believe that the paint did it unless he had first done something uncanny to the paint. The doctor shut the door behind him with a

swing. The fiddler was all alone in the yard, peering through the palings. "What?" he cried, hurrying out.

A flash of sunlit wings met him, and Trascan settled by the open cage. Clothilde's head came out through the branches of a fig-tree in the empty yard just as the doctor reached the fence.

"Duck back under the leaves," he whispered sharply. "There 's a cart passing in the road, and they 'll see you! Are you crazy, climbing in other people's trees?"

The black head disappeared. "W'at way did Trascan fly?" a soft voice questioned out of ambush.

"Home," said the doctor, "and you follow him. The cart 's gone by."

After a moment Clothilde tumbled lightly over the high fence and came down on her feet just at the doctor's side. "I did n' go faw no foolin', mo' dan befo'," she said. "Uncle Giacomo he build Trascan a new leg dis mawnin' an' Trascan 'ad de queer idea to fly into de trees in de yard of de cat, an' Uncle Giacomo tole me to put myself into the trees an' drive 'im back if de cat made herse'f in sight."

"Did he tell you to make yourself in sight, too?" the doctor asked.

"Naw," Clothilde answered. She felt that the doctor was not as seriously cross as he had been earlier in the morning, and a spark of mischief came into her eyes. "Do yo' reckon," she asked, "dat people would care ver' much if I hoodooed dat ole cat? She 's all dat owns de empty place."

"There 's no telling what people will care about when it comes to hoodoos," the doctor answered gravely. "Come in. Your uncle wants to tell you what puts the light on the wheel. I decided to ask him about it myself, and there 's nothing queer about it at all."

"In co'se dere is n'," said Clothilde, stanchly, "w'en my uncle is so good."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLOWER-POTS TAKE PART

HE potter leaned from a crutch and shaped a chubby red-clay pitcher on his wheel, while Clothilde trod the pedal, contentedly humming, "*Tournez encore, tournez toujours.*" Whatever the rest of Potosi might be saying and thinking, the weeks had slipped uneventfully out of sight at the pottery, and Giacomo was getting well. The doctor had not been in for several days, and Giacomo shrugged his shoulders and felt lonesome, though he did not need the doctor. Almost the only thing that he could not do now for himself was to turn the wheel when he stood beside it. Clothilde knew that as soon as he began to do this she would not be necessary any longer, and her heart was such a blending of eagerness and regret that she could not tell whether she wanted to go back

to Cypress Creek or not. She was wondering about it as she turned the wheel, and she was questioning, too, why her uncle asked her to turn it at all. The little song died away in a slow breath.

"Uncle Giacomo," she said, "yo' tell me it is jus' de paint dat make de w'eel shine in de night, but yo' never say w'at make it turn itse'f dat night I saw it. I reckon, me, dat de *bon Dieu* could make it turn itse'f better dan de paint."

The potter's face wrinkled under the eyes into a smile. "I reckon you 're right, Clothilde," he answered. "The *bon Dieu* could make it turn better than anything else could if that was his way, but according to what I 've seen, it 's his plan to give somebody the idea of doing what he wants for himself. Now just look here."

The wheel was still standing by the bed. Giving his crutch to Clothilde, Giacomo sat down on the edge of the mattress and stretched his injured leg out straight along it. With the foot of his sound leg he managed to reach the pedal and to tread it. He looked across at Clothilde. "I 'm pretty near as bad as the fiddler," he said; "but when I 'm nervous

nothing puts me to sleep like running the wheel; and that night when the storm came up and I saw that it was n't waking you, I knew the sound of the wheel would n't wake you either, and when I found I could make it go, and kind of play I was well and at work, I was as happy as a youngster. One of the shutters blew open and my lamp went out, and it was just like old times with the wheel whirling in the dark, and no light but its own. I did n't hear you come to the door; and the next day when the doctor brought you in, and I told you about the paint, I supposed you 'd seen my well leg down there treading the pedal, so I did n't say anything about that. Now are you satisfied that it 's all me,— and paint?"

Clothilde nodded her puzzled head. "De *bon Dieu* 'e make yo' *t'ink* it is all yo', any-'ow," she said, "bud I t'ink me dat he he'p yo' a heap, else w'y by daylight are yo' always wantin' me to do de treadin' faw yo'?"

Giacomo got to his crutch again. "You 're mighty hard to corner, Clothilde," he said, laughing; "but if you notice you 'll see that I work to better advantage by standing than by trying to lie down and to sit up and to stand all at the same time. That 's what you

might call working three ways for Sunday,— don't you think so, Troululu?"

The fiddler did not notice. She was sitting very quiet, grinding the empty coffee-mill, and singing "*Tournez toujours*," while she thought out some problems of her own. Giacomo's glance lingered on the little face that was so vitally keen, and on the intelligence of the big intense eyes, and he told himself that he must find some new plan and place for living before she was old enough to understand what people believed of him here. Clothilde's stubborn faith that the *bon Dieu* had been of direct help about the wheel showed only too plainly how other folks would cling to their ideas. Potosi people had disliked him in the first place because he had been so unsociable, and now that they thought him possessed of evil magic, he might just as well give up and go away. He wondered if in some new place he could train himself to be enough like every one else to make friends for the fiddler. His good little wife would have made them,— it was in that way that he and Troululu would always miss her most of all. The fiddler broke through his thoughts with a question which startled him, it came so fitly.

"Papa," she said, "what does it mean, *'oo-dooed?* Clothilde said that; she said, 'Would peopl' care ver' much if I 'oodooed dat ole cat?'"

The fiddler's mimicry was unconscious but perfect. Clothilde turned a deep crimson. "I did n' know Troululu 'ear dat," she said. "I say dat to de doctor cause 'e scold me faw goin' into de empty yard to drive Trascan 'ome. Bud she 'ear *everyt*'ing, an' it look like she goin' to remember her of everyt'ing clear till she die. It was two t'ree weeks back I say it."

"It 's a word we 'll not speak here," the potter said. "I 've used it too, but I reckon if we drop it altogether she 'll forget, if we don't keep her in mind by forbidding her when she says it. I don't want her to know that word."

"What does it mean, papa?" the fiddler demanded, leaving her coffee-mill to come closer. "Don't talk to Clothilde, talk to me."

"The best I can tell you is *scared*," said Giacomo. "Clothilde wanted to know if people would mind if she scared the cat,— was n't that it, Clothilde?"

"Yas," began Clothilde; then she stopped treading the wheel and lifted her hand. "W'at

is dat?" she asked. She was always the first to notice any sound outside.

The potter bent his head and listened. They could hear the distant rush of many feet, that grew louder and nearer and mingled itself with shouts and cries.

"What can have happened?" the potter asked.

Something crashed against the window and fell inside. It was a brick, and it answered him. Another followed it, and another and another. Giacomo swept the baby up under his arm and ran with her to the room that was stacked full of pots. "Stay there or they 'll kill you," he told her as he thrust her behind the door. "Now help me get the wheel in there, it 's what they 're after," he said, leaping back to Clothilde, "and you 'll stay with them while I stand outside the door." They ran across the room with the wheel between them and shoved it in among the pots.

"Don' shut the door," cried Clothilde, "stan' wid it open an' we 'll chunk dem wid de pots. See, I 'll take de baby far back in one corner w'ere we 'ave make a little place faw play, far back." She crawled off with the fiddler, grinding over and between the pots.

Giacomo hurled a pot at a man who was aiming a brick at him from the outer door, and the man jumped back. There was a great shout of "Hoodoo! Hoodoo! Hoodoo!" The wind sometimes shrieked like that around the pottery, but this was deeper and more fierce. There were angry men outside, men who were ready to strike down the potter if he stood between them and his wheel, yet their fear of the wheel and all that came from it rose through their anger. Clothilde crawled back to her uncle's elbow and would not be sent away. Their thin pale faces were clear and firm as white stone against the shadowy background of the ranks of pots. The bricks kept flying through the windows and the door, shattering queer grinning idols and homely baking-dishes and the slender terra-cotta vases whose lines had haunted Giacomo until he worked them out in clay; but whenever a man came near to door or window, and a pot went whizzing out at him, the man dodged aside and then ran away from it as if he were running from a ghost.

"That 's the advantage of being a hoodoo," Giacomo said between his teeth. "A-ah!" A brick fell just short of him and crushed a

pot which had rolled to his feet. "Stand well behind me, Clothilde," he said, "or crawl back and keep that child from screaming."

He glanced down at her an instant, and while his eyes were turned a man bent into the doorway ready to throw. Clothilde saw him and sprang a step forward, flinging a pot. "I don' stan' behin' nobody till deir bricks is gone," she cried. "Yo' Philipe Gomez, yo' dare to say I make de lightnin' strike yo' boat! Yo' t'ink de *bon Dieu* let a little girl fire de lightnin' w'en she don' even know 'ow it get in de sky?"

The man stood quite still, merely dodging the pot. His hands were empty, but he clenched one of them and shook it at Clothilde. "Yo' did turn de lightnin' ag'in' my schooner," he cried; "I saw yo' comin' back from de sho'. An' what faw did yo' learn to run dat w'eel but to do harm, an' w'at faw did yo' go into de empty yard dere but to put a hoodoo on de place, so dat w'en a man sleeps dere overnight he dies? Yo' t'ink we don' know w'at go on, but we know; we know w'en de doctor who is yo' frien' take de man out an' bury 'im in de night w'en 'e t'ink nobody see. Yo' was a harmless littl' girl w'en I brought yo' down

from Cypress Creek, an' w'en I see yo' in de store an' on de street I say, 'Pore littl' t'ing, she goin' to 'ave bad luck,' an' I never t'ought dat yo' would learn de knowledge of de w'eel an' spread de bad luck worse dan ever he dared spread it." He took a step toward them, making the sign of the cross. "Come on! Come on! Come on!" he shouted to the men outside. "Are yo' skeered of de w'eel w'en yo' can cross yo'se'ves? Yo' got to he'p me now to break de w'eel or dey 'll put de hoodoo onto everyt'ing!"

Clothilde rushed out from under Giacomo's arm, her eyes flaming, a pot in either hand. "Yo' dare to call dem strong men ag'in' my uncle wid his leg not yet cure'!" she cried out. "Yo' dare to try to break his w'eel w'en de *bon Dieu* put de light on it because my uncle is so good! Dat is wa't for de w'eel shine like dat: it shine because my uncle sing to 'is baby an' hurt nobody an' never scold. It is de *bon Dieu* dat has de light an' de lightnin', an' 'e put dem w'ere 'e please; an' if 'e put de lightnin' on yo' boat an' de still white light on de w'eel, it is because 'e know de bad an' de good—". She stopped a moment, for her words stumbled on one another as they crowded

through her lips, and her breath was troubled. "An' de *bon Dieu* don' want no girls like me to he'p 'im wid de lightnin'," she repeated, "an' I don' know w'at lies yo' tell 'boud a dead man, cause dere ain't not'ing in de empty place but a cat, an' de *bon Dieu* put de light on my uncle's w'eel because my uncle is so good."

"Come back here, Clothilde," the potter called. He could not leave the wheel and the baby, but the red spots which had not risen before burned in his cheeks. "Come back here, and don't move from behind me, and I 'll break the head of the man that comes a step nearer, and they all know it. Don't waste any words on them. We have pots here, and they 're better than words. The wheel made 'em, and they 'll take care of the wheel. Ah," he cried to Philipe Gomez, "you think my wheel belongs to the devil, and yet you try to fight it when this room is full of the pots it has made. Come back here, Clothilde, and you, Philipe Gomez, get outside my door."

Clothilde moved from between them, but she did not go back. Gomez stood at bay, courage and anger wrestling with the superstition that pulled back on him and made his legs shake with fear. All the shouting had

died away outside. The men dared not follow Gomez into the house; their bricks were gone, and they stood huddled by the windows listening, and the only sound that came to them while Giacomo waited for Gomez to move or to speak was the wild screaming of the fiddler from back among the pots.

"What?"

Every man of them turned with a start. They had not seen the doctor coming down the road, but he had seen their faces, and he hurried in among them with a grim-looking smile. "So you 've come," he said. "Thought it was time to see if Barse had got well of his hurt, did you? Very neighborly you 've been —what put you in mind of this little surprise party?"

The men glowered back at him. There were narrow-browed Creoles and lazy blue-eyed poor whites of English blood, and rough-featured foreign sailors who had run aground in this tiny quiet harbor; but all their faces had the same marks of passion half controlled or paralyzed by fear of the potter's gift of harm.

"You-all need n't start out to twit us, Doc," one of the poor whites answered sullenly; "it

won't be healthy for you. You 're a little too took up with these-hyar hoodoos. You-all did n't know you was seed when you stole out by night an' buried the man that was hoodooed to death over yonder." He jerked his thumb toward the empty house which was hidden by the pottery. "You did n't know that me an' Jim Tardy seed you when you first went into the house. We was restin' an' smokin' our pipes on yon side the empty yard, an' we heard the groanin' an' slipped into the bushes to listen, 'cause we reckoned there was something wrong, an' we seed you-all come out this door, an' come by, an' stop an' listen, an' walk in like you owned the whole ground an' war n't afeard. An' then we saw you come a-slyin' out as white as a rag, an' we waited till you come a-sneakin' back with a lot o' things, an' there ain't one of us but thinks you made a good fight to save the pore creetur, an' you need n't be skeered for yoreself—"

"Stop!" the doctor said, in a loud, slow voice. The taunting look had gone from his face, and it was full of wrath. "Do you know what you 've brought on yourselves?" he asked. "Do you know what was the matter with the man I found in the house?"

"Hoodooed," several voices muttered.

"Hoodooed!" the doctor echoed, and his tone had a touch of pity; "yes, hoodooed, if you like the word. The big black hoodoo did it. It comes sometimes in this country to clear the world of such poor fools as you— only, God help us, it don't stop with the fools. Do you know why I stayed with that man all day and told nobody, and buried him alone at night? He had run away from a ship in quarantine at the islands,— he had just enough strength to tell me,— and he rowed here with the sickness coming on him, and crawled ashore and found that empty house to die in. I took care of him, and buried him, and purified the house and myself, and told only those who had to know and could be trusted. They thought as I did, that the danger would die with him, and there would be no panic and no fear. Much good it does to try to keep the like of you out of danger. You 've followed and spied and watched a yellow-fever case. You don't like the sound of it, do you? It 's a little worse, I reckon, than you think Barse can do with his wheel. You were too full of your hoodoo business to be thinking of fever, but now you 'll think of it—" He paused.

The crowd had scattered like leaves before a storm. The scream of "Fever!" came back to him from men rushing along the street and swaying from side to side as if in a frenzy of pain.

"Stop!" the doctor shouted; "you 've got to hear me! Stop, all of you! Stop! Stop!"

Only cries and curses answered him as the panic swept on, gathering new voices as blinds were thrown open, and people came running out of their sleepy, shadowy houses into the glare of sunlight. Only one man out of the mob had stayed. Philipe Gomez was standing with Giacomo and Clothilde at the pottery door.

"If you 're keeping your head," the doctor said to him, excitedly, "there 'll be work for you to-day. We 've got to keep these people from refugeeing into the country and spreading the fever broadcast. Can you make them understand that the infection is already in them, if it 's going to be, and they can't get away from it?"

"I can try," said Gomez, "but de terror is on dem." He swept his arms toward the empty street. They all looked at one another, under the great dread that threatened them. After

a moment, Gomez gave himself a sharp, despairing fling and ran down the road.

"You 'll go back to Cypress Creek to-day, my little nurse," Giacomo said to Clothilde. He had been silent since the doctor had spoken to the men; but thoughts were flashing as swift and clear as messages through his mind. "After all she 's done for me, to have anything happen to her," kept singing itself behind all the other thoughts. He was not troubled for the fiddler. She was a part of himself, and they would stay where they were, and live or die as it happened, and show that they had no fear. But something crossed his eyes and clouded them with softness as he thought of Clothilde and her trustful little mother, who had sent her to him into all the hardship of unfriendliness and suspicion and attack, and now, perhaps, of death. The doctor could say what he would about spreading the fever, but Clothilde should go back to Cypress Creek. "For, if I were her mother," Giacomo thought, "I 'd rather have her back with me and take care of her, and run the risk of all dying together than to feel that I 'd sent her away among as good as strangers, and she 'd died there. Yes," he said aloud, "you 'll see your

little mother to-night, and I reckon you 'll be pretty glad."

"She 'll be mighty glad to see yo' an' de baby," Clothilde answered, her face lighting up.

The potter set his lips. "We 're not going," he said. "There will be plenty of people yet to think I had a hand in this, and I can't refugee from it. I 've got to face whatever comes."

"Folderol!" said the doctor. "But you must refugee up in the woods, where you 'll be near to nobody. You don't want to go to Cypress Creek. Hard to say it, and I don't want to scare you, little Santa Claus; but there 's a chance for you to have the fever from being next door to that man, and you 're not the one to want to take it home. I don't think you 'll have it, for the wind was the other way, and I did everything I could; but it 's not a risk to play with."

"But she must n't be sick away from her mother," Giacomo put in hoarsely.

Both men looked at Clothilde, and she stood between them with her head downcast and her cheeks fading. Cypress Creek with its quiet and its love seemed crying out for her. She could see her mother hurrying from the

low doorway of home with hands outstretched and shining eyes, and she could feel herself caught into the swift, long, warm embrace that mothers give to children coming home. Even death would be so easy if her mother held her fast and Father Henri pointed a bright way for her through all the darkness. Uncle Giacomo was very good and very dear, but he did not know all that Father Henri did. She clenched her brown hands at her sides, and her tears brimmed over, but still she did not raise her head. The doctor reached out and touched her tenderly. In the silence they could hear the fiddler screaming in untiring rage.

"Ah," Giacomo broke out, "she has to go. I can't have anything happen to her after all she 's done for me; and she has been more patient than I have with the fiddler."

With a little heartbroken cry Clothilde threw her arms about his neck. "I won't leave de fiddler," she sobbed, "w'en maybe she 'll be sick too, an' I won't take de fever to my mama. I — I —" She drew herself away from him and dashed the tears out of her eyes. "I — I 'll jus' go an' get 'er out of de hole I drop 'er in to keep 'er safe."

The doctor bent and brushed the dust of broken pots from his shoe. "I thought I knew her," he muttered. Giacomo said nothing; there was too much sorrow in his thoughts.

CHAPTER IX

THE WINGS OF THE BLACK FEAR

HE fiddler had been wildly anxious to leave the security of the pots, but she was far too angry to walk, so she came back kicking and screaming in Clothilde's arms. When they reached Giacomo, Clothilde swung her to and fro beside him, trying to put her upon her feet, but the small legs were possessed by stubborn limpness, and all that Clothilde could do was to let her sink gradually into a formless bundle of indignation upon the floor. Giacomo reached down to pet the little bundle with its gasping breath and tear-stained face.

The doctor looked on with unusual sympathy. "Got enough temper for a town," he said; "but it was pretty good of her to stay where you put her. Where was she?"

"But," exclaimed Clothilde, "she had to

stay! She was back in de pots. I 'ad make a littl' hole dere, me, deep like a well, faw play. I put 'er into it, so," — she reached down her arms,—"and she is not yet enough tall to come out by 'erself. Dat keep 'er safe."

"You — bad — *méchante* — Clothilde," sobbed the fiddler, whose heart had melted to a fresh gush of weeping under Giacomo's caresses; "you — did n't — come in *too* — like — always. I did n't *told* you you could go away,— I was — afraid." She wiped her eyes on her worn old dress, leaving red dust-tracks across her face, and sobbed a little longer tremulously but without tears. Then she lifted her head and looked about her, making wide eyes of reproof at all the broken things which strewed the floor. "Who did it, papa?" she asked.

"Just some men," her father answered. "They played a very rough play here, worse than you and Clothilde, when you build a tower too high, out of pots."

"What for did they talk so loud?" the fiddler asked, looking straight into his eyes. "I heard them talk too loud, papa, and Clothilde talked too loud, and you talked too loud, papa, and I was afraid. What for was I afraid?"

Giacomo did not answer. He was bending above her, stroking her hair, and wondering what to say, when she noticed his crutch rising beside her. Some dimples danced into her face, under the red dust. She made a sudden spring and caught the two sides of the crutch and climbed into the foothold that was made where they joined. Giacomo nearly lost his balance, for she had taken him unawares. Clothilde jumped to steady him, and the doctor picked Troululu off the crutch.

"You little crab!" he cried, holding her over his head, "you 're out of mischief now, for a little while, I reckon." He kept her aloft in punishment while he turned to the potter. "If it 's decided that all of you stay on here, I must get along; I 've got to see how many sane men there are left in town, and what can be done."

"I wish I could help," Giacomo said.

"You may before we 're through," answered the doctor. He looked at Troululu, who was staring down at him.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked.

He lowered her and gathered her suddenly into his arms; but when he had kissed each

dimple free of the red dust, he dropped her like a shot, turned, and went striding off along the white shell road that echoed to his steps.

The fiddler was a little statue of wonder. "The doctor kissed me," she said to Giacomo. "What for?" She had no memory of ever being kissed, except by her father and Clothilde. Giacomo only stooped and kissed her again, but she paid no attention. "What for did he kiss me?" she repeated. "Does he love me?"

"Yes," her father said, "I reckon he loves you, little fiddler."

The fiddler ran rapturously across to Clothilde. "Did you see the doctor kiss me?" she cried. "He kissed me *so*, and *so*,"—she patted the war-paint on her cheeks,—"just the way my little angels kiss me. Papa kisses me, and you kiss me, and the doctor kisses me, and three, four, nine little angels kiss me, because I am so good. Papa, why don't everybody kiss me when they see me on the street, and what makes the children run away?"

"Dey shall not run away no mo'," Clothilde declared. "I will tell dem, me, jus' de way I tole Philipe Gomez —"

"Hush," said the potter; "I 'm going to

make the two of you a set of real dishes for play, if you clear all the bricks and broken stuff out of this place and put it in order again."

He walked slowly across to his bed, and when Clothilde had straightened it for him, he lay down, looking spent with fatigue. "Little nurse," he said to her, "I 'd give all I ever hope to have, if you were out of this and safe with your mother,— remember that of your hoodoo uncle, won't you, whatever happens? But seeing you 're here"—he touched her dress lightly with his hand—"seeing you 're here, I wish you 'd just tell your *bon Dieu* that I thank him for sending me such a comfort,— and, little Clothilde, keep my fiddler happy."

Clothilde felt a choking in her throat. "Uncle Giacomo, yo' ain't sick, are yo'?" she asked.

"No, dear," the potter answered, "I 'm not sick, thank God; only tired." He drew her down to him and kissed her. Then he turned and closed his eyes.

Clothilde stole away and began groping about the floor for the wreckage of things which had been friends to her since she came to the pottery. The many-colored bits of earthenware swam before her eyes and sometimes seemed to be rising out of reach. She

kept pausing in anger at herself. Up at Cypress Creek, it was her mama's boast that Clothilde never cried, and now she seemed to have tears in her eyes all of the time. Troululu, not finding her good company, soon stole away to the yard, and there, in the sunshine and the stillness, her baby voice took up the words which she had heard outside, when she was screaming in the well of pots. It seemed to Clothilde that for hours and hours the child kept singing, "Hoodoo! hoodoo! hoodoo! hoodoo!" At last Giacomo put his hand to his ears. Clothilde started to call her, but Giacomo murmured, "Leave her alone; she is happy."

The doctor looked in again that evening to tell them how the day had passed. He was disgusted and disheartened, for the fear of fever still kept people beyond all reason. The village authorities had little power and less purpose, and refugees had been streaming out of town by every road. Those who did not go were not staying from courage, but from the worst fear of all, a vacillating fear that had not even the strength for escape.

"I 'm surprised at Gomez, though," the doctor said; "he 's been as cool as—Clothilde, and I reckon, from a word he dropped, that

she had something to do with it. He talked to those folks like a preacher; did a lot more good than I could, though it was little enough."

Clothilde was keeping the fiddler out of mischief by making shadow pictures on the wall, and for a little while the two men watched the pictures affectionately.

"You see," said Giacomo, "she gave him her ideas about the wheel. I could tell it was striking pretty deep from the queer look of his face as he stood there, wanting to go ahead but not daring to for fear he was making a mistake about who owned the light. Queer how the hoodoo notion makes a fool of a man. Gomez is naturally mighty pious and mighty brave, and my name 's not Giacomo any more if he don't begin to show it now there 's real danger on hand."

"Well," said the doctor, "if he 's lost the hoodoo notion it 's not because I 've told him that you painted your wheel with *lu*minous paint"— he always drawled the word "luminous" contemptuously. "I 've made that little statement to all the people in town, and their minds have shed it just the way a duck sheds water; but if little Santa Claus gets to talking to them, maybe —" He jumped from

the edge of the bed where he had been sitting. "Well, well, there are plenty of people beside you to be thinking of now, but we 'll see."

"Yes," said Giacomo, "we 'll see." They shook hands gravely, and the doctor patted Clothilde on the shoulder and kissed the fiddler. All of them except the fiddler knew that without a word they had promised one another the best strength and endurance that was in them if the great dread came true.

The fiddler threw herself across her father's knees and hugged them. "He kissed me again, the doctor did," she exulted. "Two times to-day he kissed me! Where did he find so many kisses for me, and what made him have his goodness on his face?"

"Because you 're the best of all the babies, Troululu," the potter answered, as he had answered many other questions many times before.

The next morning quarantine had been declared against Potosi in answer to messages which the doctor had sent out. The few slow trains which crept along the coast-line in those days passed without stopping, and the trading-schooners swung idly at anchor in the blue, breeze-kissed channel, or nosed against

the straggling piers that fringed the beach. Out of the hot, dusty September sky a blackness settled over the little town. People scarcely ventured into the streets, and every one knew that in the night a woman had knocked frantically at the doctor's door, and that he had gone with her and had not come away. He left a word at the pottery as he went. Clothilde found it and it read, "Jim Tardy down with the fever. Started to run away this afternoon, but came back sick tonight. You'll not see me again unless you get it yourselves."

After that morning the days followed one another silently at the pottery. Even Troululu's ceaseless chatter sounded small and pitiful, and did not seem to break through the hush which pressed in upon them from outside. The leaves of the China trees kept fluttering from the branches and drifting hither and yonder in ragged, capricious flocks, like children, but nothing else was astir in the empty streets. The way to the graveyard was not near to the pottery, or they would have seen more passers, for Clothilde heard of death after death as she went on her errands in the village. The grocer was most

given to talking to her, but she noticed that after the first he told the deaths listlessly, as if they had grown commonplace, and he was no longer full of questions about her uncle and herself and the pottery. It was as if nothing mattered to him any more; and one day when the store was shut, and Clothilde knocked without rousing any one, the first thought that crossed her mind was that he had finally lost interest even in selling his goods; but the next moment she heard a voice moaning inside the door. She stood quite silent, thinking what she ought to do, for she had already tried the latch, and it was locked. Then the rhythm of swift walking came along the street, and, looking up, she saw the doctor hurrying toward her, and waving her from him with his hands. "Not yet, not yet, little Santa Claus," he called; "we don't need you yet." His voice had all of its strong emphatic comfort, but his face was drawn with deep lines of care. Clothilde moved away reluctantly. In the instant she had stood there a vision had come to her of making an entrance to the fever-stricken man, and saving his life. She did not feel in the least afraid, only pitiful for the moaning, and almost exultant in her op-

portunity. It was a wild, childish dream, yet she knew that if she could do something like that people would not think she was a hoodoo any more. She walked slowly, looking back over her shoulder, and she saw the doctor set himself against the door and force it from its weak hinges. Some one must have taken him word that there was a sick man inside, for he had not paused an instant, but just before he went inside he called to Clothilde again.

"How 's your uncle?" he asked.

"Well!" Clothilde answered. "He don' use 'is crutch no mo'."

"Good," said the doctor, and hurried into the house.

That night an oyster-shell struck the pottery door sharply. Giacomo opened it and peered against the dark.

"Can you leave your fiddler with Clothilde and come and nurse Philipe Gomez?" asked the doctor's voice. "He 's been working night and day, and now he 's down himself. He says he 's willing to have you come, and there 's no one else."

"All right," said Giacomo.

"Quick!" called the doctor. "No time to

waste, and I must tell you what to do as we go."

"All right," Giacomo said again, but he stood quite still, and put his hand up to his head. "Clothilde," he said.

"It is not right!" Clothilde cried vehemently; "dey 'ave done not'ing faw yo'."

"No, papa, it 's *not right*," the fiddler echoed. The sound of the shell had wakened her, and she was sitting up straight and fierce in her bed, although she did not know what was going on.

Giacomo snatched her up and kissed her with a passion of tenderness. "It 's for you, for you, for you," he whispered, carrying her to Clothilde. "It 's for her, Clothilde," he said aloud; "and you 'll keep her here, and not try to see or hear from me unless she is sick or you are sick." He stopped a moment, with his clear deep eyes searching Clothilde's steady face. "Little Clothilde," he went on, "I think the good God will take care of you—but listen. Every day that you 're both well, hang Trascan's red cage in the window of your room, and every night put a lamp there. I 'll come in sight, and then I 'll know."

"Quick!" the doctor called.

Giacomo kissed Clothilde on the forehead, and bent down toward the fiddler. She threw herself round his neck, and clung to him so that it took his strength to unclasp her arms. As he hurried out and along the road with the doctor he could hear her screaming for him to come back.

"Little Santa Claus 'll soon pacify her," the doctor said.

"Of course," Giacomo answered in a short voice. He could scarcely speak when the fiddler was begging him to come and he was going away from her. He looked back once. Light streamed through the pottery windows between the weird black figures he had shaped, and Clothilde's silhouette still guarded the doorway with the fiddler huddled against her heart. The potter turned towards the darkness again, swallowing hard, but thanking God for Clothilde. With her to care for his fiddler he could go out and help these people who had hated him, and if he lived they would be his friends and the fiddler's friends forever, and if he died Clothilde would take the fiddler home to Cypress Creek and there would be children to play with her and women to care

for her, better than he, perhaps, in spite of all he liked to say against them; and there would be so much love all about her that she would never miss his love nor know that it had been the greatest love of all. His little fiddler, who had never been an hour away from him, would slowly forget the pottery and the long nights when the wheel had glowed and he had sung to her. She would forget to call his name when she was frightened, or when she was happy — quickly, very quickly, she would even forget his face.

"Doctor," he asked huskily, "are most of them dying with the fever?"

"Not a very large per cent.," the doctor answered. "All the hot wet weather has made the place ripe for it, but it 's not a very virulent type. The trouble is, these people do so many imprudent things, and they keep one another excited and frightened. You must insist on absolute quiet for Gomez; don't let him lift a hand."

Giacomo straightened himself in the dark and smiled at his own borrowing of sorrow. He made up his mind that he would neither die nor be sick, and a sudden buoyancy went

through him as he realized that he was walking off through the night in comradeship with a man who trusted him.

"Doctor," he said, "my head has been back with those children, so far, but now I 'm ready to take exact orders. I 've never nursed yellow fever, and I want to know all that 's to be expected and all that 's to be done.

CHAPTER X

THE LONELINESS OF TROULULU

ONG after darkness had closed behind the potter, Clothilde stood in the doorway hugging the fiddler close and closer in her arms. The empty silence of the room seemed harder to face than the great breathing loneliness of the star-dusk in which the fiddler's piercing "Pa-pa! Pa-pa!" echoed faintly from the distance and was gone. At last the fiddler fell into wordless sobbing and Clothilde went inside with her and closed the door.

It seemed as if they could never go to sleep. Troululu lay with her great eyes full of mystery staring at the little lamp up on the shelf, or roaming along the walls. She had met the first defeat of her life and she was pondering it, so that her longing for Giacomo was not as great at first as her wonder that he

could have gone when she was crying for him. Clothilde lay down beside her and reached a protecting arm over the little figure that was so absolutely stirless that again and again she lifted her head to see if sleep had not touched the solemn eyes. But the gaze she intercepted held no token of wavering, and it made the loneliness seem more lonely, for it awed Clothilde, and she did not dare to gather the fiddler up close to her again and kiss and comfort her as she would have comforted one of her own little sisters. If the fiddler had kept on crying it would have seemed more human and less sad.

The fiddler sighed at last, a long, weary sigh. Clothilde bent hoveringly over her, whispering, "My po' *chérie*."

"Is Papa coming pretty soon?" the fiddler asked.

"No, he can'd come," Clothilde answered, "not ver' soon. He has gone to take care of a man dat is sick, an' 'e can'd come back."

"What made him go away and not come when I called?"

"He had to go, po' littl' *chérie*, de po' man was so sick," Clothilde murmured, passing an arm under the baby's shoulders and looking

down at her with tender eyes. "He had to go, po' *chérie*," she repeated softly, "but Clothilde don' 'ave to go, an' Clothilde will take good care of yo' till 'e come 'ome."

The fiddler drew herself away and sat up to listen, for some night sound had caught her ear. "Papa!" she called in sweet bird-notes; "Papa!"

"He can'd 'ear yo', *chérie*," Clothilde said.

"Papa!" the fiddler called again, "Papa! Papa!"

Clothilde could not endure the child's pleading face and voice. "Don' call 'im," she begged; "he is so far, far off wid de po' sick man. He has gone w'ere 'e cannot come."

The fiddler looked up at her with a child's strange calm. "Is my papa dead?" she asked.

The older child shivered back from her. "Yo' saw 'im walk right oud de house yo'se'f, Troululu," she cried. "Yo' know ver' well he is not dead. W'y, my po' *petite*, w'at faw yo' ask if 'e is dead?"

"My mama is dead," Troululu answered, "'cause papa said so. Papa said I had a mama up in the blue, blue sky, and then I called, 'Mama! mama! mama!' and she

did n't come, and papa said she could n't come 'cause she was dead; and whenever I called her he let me play horse with his mustaches 'cause she could n't come. And now my papa won't come. Is he going to climb and climb and climb up through the dark, and be with my mama when the sky gets blue?"

Clothilde caught up the words and held them in her memory. If anything should happen to Giacomo they would be good to use again; but the thought of how soon she might have to use them was more than she could bear. "Oh, Troululu, yo' papa ain' dead," she sobbed; "po' littl' Troululu, 'e ain' dead at all."

The fiddler's wide eyes slowly brimmed with tears. "He — would n't — come," she said.

"'E will come, po' littl' *chérie*," Clothilde sobbed again, "'e will come."

"But I called him," the fiddler repeated, as if that settled everything; "I called him — and he — *did n't come*."

"'E will come," Clothilde answered; and softly, over and over again, she said it, until she saw the kind dark shadows of sleep fluttering across the fiddler's eyes; and more and more softly she kept on saying it, until it grew

into one of their ceaseless songs to the wheel, and her own black lashes drooped against her cheeks. The flame of the little lamp burned low, and all the things upon the shelves seemed shrinking out of sight. The wick glowed for a while and then sparkled out, leaving nothing in the pottery but peaceful breathing and sleep, and the pale light of the wheel, which stood like a tireless watcher by the bed.

When the morning sunshine came into the room it found the children still asleep. Clothilde's hand was resting on the wheel, for she had wakened once and reached out to it, feeling that the *bon Dieu* was very good to her since he had not taken away its light. A beam of the sunshine crept across the floor and touched her face. She opened her eyes with a startled remembrance that she and the fiddler were alone.

"Has my papa come?" asked the fiddler, opening her eyes too, as if something had told her that Clothilde was awake.

"Naw, 'e 'as n't come, not yet," Clothilde answered, "an' we mus' hurry an' dress an' get our breakfas', an' den, do yo' know w'at we goin' to do?"

"Go and find him?" asked Troululu.

"Dat would n' be no fun," said Clothilde, "cause he would jus' say to us, 'Go back an' take care of de 'ouse like I tole yo', w'ile I take care of de sick man.' Naw, we goin' to make all sort of littl' pots on de w'eel, an' yo 'll play yo' are de papa an' I 'm de Troululu, an' yo' say, 'Fiddler, if yo' ain' good I put yo' on de w'eel an' make yo' into a pint cup!"

"A-a-ah, I won't play that," the fiddler cried; "that 's just a mean, little *hoodoo* play,—that 's what it is, it 's a hoodoo play; you 're too big to be a little Troululu, and I want you to take me to my papa."

"An' I will make a littl' new dish on de w'eel," Clothilde went on, "an' put it dere by de chimney, an call all de littl' angels to come an' eat breakfas' wid us—"

"No," interrupted the fiddler, beginning to sob, "they 're too *méchants*, the little angels; I don't like them any more, not any more at all. They live up in the blue, blue sky with my mama, and they don't bring my mama here to see me down the chimney. I like my papa the best. I want you to take me to my papa."

"An' de littl' angels will say, "Who make such a good coffee?" Clothilde persisted hope-

fully, "an' I will tell dem, me, 'Littl' Troululu always get up an' he'p me make de coffee, dat make it so *délicieux*, an' dey will say,—"

"I won't drink coffee with those bad, littl' angels," the fiddler screamed, dropping out of bed and making for the outer door, "I 'm going to my papa."

"But yo' can'd go, littl' fiddler," Clothilde said, running after her and pulling her away from the lock, "yo' can'd go, de man is too sick, an' yo' papa don' want yo' to come, an' he is too far, yo' papa is too far, faw yo' to go to 'im'.

"My papa is not far, I saw him *les*terday," the fiddler said. "He 's just up in the blue sky with my mama and three, four, nine little angels. And I 'm going to my papa; that 's what I 'm going to do."

"How will yo' go?" asked Clothilde practically; "how will yo' climb into de sky widout no wings? De littl' angels all has nice big wings."

"No," said Troululu, "they don't have any wings at all, they just climb."

Clothilde pointed to the blue clay angel on the shelf. "Don' yo' see de wings? Everyt'ing in de sky 'aş to 'ave wings."

"Like the birds?" asked the fiddler, looking

up in the bright earnestness with which she always gazed at new ideas.

"Jus' like big, w'ite birds," Clothilde answered, picking the fiddler up and beginning to dress her.

"Who makes their wings?" the fiddler asked.

"The *bon Dieu*," said Clothilde.

"And does he take them off at night, like their dresses, when he puts them to bed?"

"Naw, dey stay on all de time," Clothilde answered, beginning to feel a little unsteady in the deep water of the fiddler's questions. "Dey keep dem on jus' like de birds."

"I want the *bon Dieu* to make me some wings,—why don't he?" asked the fiddler.

"W'en yo' die," said Clothilde, fastening the last button with a great relief; "but now le's make de breakfas'."

The fiddler broke into another wail. "I like my papa the best," she cried. "I don't want any breakfast, I want some wings to fly up to my papa. O–oh — I like my papa the best — I like my papa the best — and when I called him he *did n't* come."

Clothilde looked around her in despair. The rows of water monkeys, the vases and the pitchers, the frog mugs and the puzzle mugs,

the fighting green dragons on the upper shelf, the blue clay angel, and the long brown alligator, gave her no idea for comforting a baby who liked her papa best. "And he told me to keep her happy," Clothilde thought. As she stood there with the baby quivering and sobbing at her feet, all the little pleasures of all the long days at the pottery came back to her, and they all seemed now to have been so centered in Giacomo that it seemed only pitiful to think of trying them when he was gone. And he had never scolded, no matter what they had injured in their play. She remembered the day they built the high tower out of pots. The fiddler always had the most fun with the pots. Clothilde went to the room where she and Giacomo had resisted the siege of the pottery; the pots were cupped into one another just as she had often strung azalias or jasmine bells. She took two stacks as high as she could carry, and, holding one against her with each hand, went out into the yard. She made several trips before the fiddler noticed her, and she was building a high wall out of the pots when the fiddler came silently beside her.

After a long time Troululu spoke. "What for?" she asked.

"To see how high I can make it," Clothilde answered.

"Can I climb on it," asked the fiddler, "up to the sky?"

"If we get it enough high," Clothilde answered.

The fiddler handed her a pot and kept on handing until Clothilde persuaded her to start another wall alongside, so as to have one for each foot. While she was building it Clothilde slipped away to start the fire and to hang Trascan's bright cage in her window as a sign that all was well.

In spite of Clothilde's constant efforts, there was never a day that the fiddler did not plan to go to her father, but she cried less as the days crept along and were followed by the slow reluctant weeks, and Clothilde, weary from long hours of ceaseless romping, was thankful every night to take down the red cage and put the lamp in its place. Sometimes she had to take the fiddler and go out on errands, and then she always asked for news of her uncle and of the fever, but after the grocer who liked to talk with her was taken sick she had to go elsewhere, and other dealers were less communicative. Philipe Go-

mez recovered and Giacomo was called to another case and then to another. When the third man was getting better there was a change in the way Clothilde was told of it. She was quick to notice the new tone.

"I 'ave told yo'," she said, "dat my uncle is so good dat his w'eel is let to shine, an' in co'se he know de bes' how to take care of sick peopl' w'en 'e 'as jus' been sick himself."

She went back with her heart carrying her, it was so light. "Dese po' miserab' peopl' going to love yo' papa now, Troululu," she said.

"I like my papa the best," said the fiddler. "When will he come?"

As they turned into the street toward the pottery they saw a man walking slowly, bending over a cane. As he heard their voices he raised his face. It was Philipe Gomez, still thin and haggard from his sickness. He was braving a relapse by coming out so soon, but Clothilde did not know that.

"Don' come up to me," he said, "I ave been wid de fever an' it is bettah faw yo' not to come too near. I 'ave been to see if de cage was in yo' window.'

Clothilde drew the fiddler close to her. "Is my uncle sick?" she asked slowly.

"Naw, 'e ain' sick," Gomez answered in the strained bodiless voice of the very weak. "It is de doctor. De doctor come to see my littl' boy an' 'e fell sick in de house."

"De doctor!" Clothilde echoed. She had never thought that the doctor could be sick, and an unbearable pang went through her as if his being sick now was because she had forgotten his danger. Gomez saw her lips begin to quiver.

"Don' be skeered," he said gently in his monotonous voice. "Wid yo' uncle dere, it will come all right. He know all de medicine now like de doctor 'imself."

"I tole yo', Philipe Gomez," Clothilde began, but the man's pallid face reproached her and she faltered.

"Yo' tole me de truth," he said solemnly. His strained features began to work like a woman's, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears. He stretched out his hands to Clothilde across the space between them. "I ask yo' fawgiveness," he began, and then stood still with the tears running down his cheeks trying to say more. "Ah," he went on at last, "I 'ave not de words. Do not come near, pass by me and go home."

Clothilde could not answer him. She lifted the fiddler in her arms and hurried by while he bowed feebly above his stick and crept along with the message of cheer to Giacomo for which he was risking his life.

"What for did he cry?" the fiddler asked.

"Because," Clothilde answered vaguely, "because yo' papa is so good."

The first stir of life that Potosi had known since the beginning of the fever came with the knowledge of the doctor's sickness. People could not stay quietly in their houses while he was in danger, and they thronged round the stores and the post-office and Philipe Gomez's door waiting for some word. Clothilde's friendly grocer was well again, and early next morning he came in his turn to look for Trascan's cage in the pottery window. Clothilde heard him call.

"Hello!"

"W'at has happened?" she asked at the door.

"Nothing," he answered. "I just came to look for your sign. As long as you and the fiddler are well Barse don't want to leave the doctor a minute, except to prescribe for them that 's sick, and the Lord knows we don't want

him to. But don't be scared, there 's not been much dying since your uncle took hold. We all got to feeling kind of easy, as if him an' the doctor was a team, and now it looks like he 's doing just as well single handed. People all feels that, and yet, as long as the old doctor lays there — " The grocer stopped a minute and went on jerkily: " People 's going wild through the streets, and even your uncle can't stop 'em. Sick and well, they 're all running round asking news of him, so your uncle sent word for you to stay close inside. Some of us will bring whatever you need and stop and holler back and forth to you a spell every morning."

The fiddler pulled at Clothilde's hand. " Is he going to take me to my papa? " she asked.

" Lord love the baby," the grocer answered; " she 's not the only child in Potosi that 's crying for its father; but I reckon all that 's left of us will stand round and shout when Giacomo gets hold of her again."

" An' w'en de doctor 's well," said Clothilde.

The grocer shook his head. " If the Lord lets the doctor live, an' if your uncle don't get the fever, every day 'll be Sunday in this town, we 'll be so full of praise. Don't fret, it 'll be

a new heaven and a new earth for Potosi folks, an' I reckon they 'll find a way to show it."

As he turned away the fiddler burst into tears.

"He did n't take me to my papa," she cried.

"Naw," said Clothilde, struggling with a strange uncertain joy, "but yo' papa will come, an' all de peopl', Troululu. Yo' never goin' to see dem run from yo' no mo'. Dey will all come an' play, an' yo' will be so happy, happy, happy. Yo' will fo'get w'en Clothilde play de hoss faw yo'."

Troululu did a strange thing instead of answering. She neither took hold of the braids which Clothilde shook down wistfully to her, nor brushed them angrily away. She went across to the bed, and climbing up on it laid her cheek upon the pillow. "I 'm so tired without my papa," she said.

Clothilde followed her in alarm. "Are yo' sick?" she asked.

"I want my papa," the fiddler answered wearily.

Clothilde felt of her head and hands, and did not find her cold or over warm. The fiddler had never willingly lain down before in all her life, as far as Clothilde knew, and Clo-

thilde tried and tried to interest her in play, but Troululu gave the same answer to everything. She was tired without her papa, and she liked him best.

Clothilde reasoned to herself that with such an unusual child as the fiddler loneliness might work itself out like this, but even without the cold dread which she could not reason away, it would have been almost heart-breaking to see the fiddler lying still and tired on the bed, and Clothilde's hands were shaking when she drew a light cover over the small feet. The fiddler did not kick the cover off. Clothilde 's heart sank at that, and she felt again of the child's forehead. There seemed to be nothing wrong, but the big eyes, which should have been so eager, were veiled with drowsiness. Clothilde stole away to the window, and looked from it without seeing anything.

If Giacomo had not sent her word to stay inside she would have run out to find some one to tell her what to do. If the fiddler was not really sick, she ought not to send for Giacomo, because that might lose the doctor's life besides putting the fiddler in danger, and she dared not go out and ask some one who knew better than she to come in and look at

the baby. She dropped on her knees and said every prayer that Father Henri had taught her ; when they were finished she looked across at the bed. The fiddler was sleeping still and there was nothing she could do but say the prayers all over several times — she wished she knew more of them so they would not be said so quickly. The sun's light moved across the floor and marked the time. An hour passed and Troululu still slept. At the end of the second hour Clothilde could not bear the silence any longer and she wakened her.

"Has my papa come?" the fiddler asked.

"Naw," Clothilde answered almost with a sob.

"Tell him I cried for him," Troululu murmured, "tell him I cried for him and he did n't come."

"I t'ink 'e will come, oh — soon," Clothilde choked out — "unless yo' feel rested an' want to build mo' wall of de pots?"

"I 'm too tired without my papa," the fiddler answered, and soon she fell asleep.

Clothilde bent over in an agony of questioning. Was it only the long weeks of loneliness, or could it be that now when all Potosi had learned to know and to love Giacomo,

and the wonderful joy of seeing his fiddler loved was opening for him, his little fiddler had crept up on to the bed to lie so still because the merciless fever had found her, too, and she was falling sick?

CHAPTER XI

THE WHEEL OF THE BON DIEU

HE fiddler began to sigh and moan in her sleep. Clothilde touched her face and found that it had suddenly grown hot. There was no question now. She ran to her window and took down the cage. "Oh, come soon! soon!" she begged.

"Don't make me into a pint cup!" the fiddler cried out sharply. "A quart cup! A quart cup! No, no, papa, don't put me on the wheel!"

"Yo' ain' on de w'eel, *chérie*, yo' in bed," Clothilde said, soothing her hands. Troululu opened her eyes and sat up with burning cheeks.

"Where 's my papa?" she asked.

"He ain' come, yo' was dreamin'," Clothilde answered. "Jus' lie down, he 's comin' prett' soon; an' he won't put yo' on de w'eel."

The fiddler let herself be put back on the pillows, and her eyelids sank half way across her full dull eyes, but in a moment she started up again. "Don't let the dreams come, Clothilde," she begged. "The big black dreams run after me and put me on the wheel — tell them to go."

"Dey shall not run after yo'," said Clothilde; "I will sing yo' '*Tournez toujours*,' an' dey will go away."

She commenced crooning softly, and the fiddler smiled up at her with one of those smiles so full of meaning that they frighten us on the faces of children. "My papa used to sing that," she said.

Her eyes wandered again, and soon she slept, but Clothilde dared not leave her now to go for help. "Oh, come soon! soon!" she implored silently. "Oh, Uncle Giacomo, yo' littl' fiddler is so sick, an' I don' know w'at to do. Oh, come soon! soon! faw I don' know w'at to do!" She buried her head in her lap and cried the words aloud into the folds of her dress. "Oh, Uncle Giacomo, can'd yo' hear me? She 's *ver*' sick, an' I don' know w'at to do!"

"Don't make me into a pint cup! Don't

make me into a pint cup! the fiddler called out again, and when Clothilde spoke to her she did not answer, but kept on with shrill feverish insistence: "Oh, I 'll be good, I 'll be good! Don't make me into a pint cup! Oh, papa, I 'll be good, I 'll be good, I 'll be good! Take me off the wheel!"

The red sunlight came streaming in through the windows and glowed on all that the potter loved,— his crowded shelves, his cumbered floor, the gray, silent wheel, the black head bowed beside the bed, and the little tossing figure that could find no rest. The sunset died away, and shadows stole down from the ceiling, and out from every corner and shelf, and gathered round the bed, but Clothilde would not light the lamp for fear it should be taken as a token of safety, even though it was not in her window. She would be glad, too, she thought, to see the wheel shine through the dark, but a band of moonlight crossed the shadows and rested on the wheel, hiding its glow. Clothilde shuddered, and could not comfort herself by remembering that the *bon Dieu* sends every kind of light.

It seemed to her that the moon had been shining a long time when she heard footsteps

along the road outside. She ran to the door, and saw her uncle hurrying toward her.

"Oh, Uncle Giacomo, de baby!" she cried out.

Giacomo ran past her and dropped down by the bed. "Little fiddler," he murmured.

He felt her hot hands push him away. "Don't make me into a pint cup!" she screamed.

Clothilde saw him totter to his feet, and heard him sob. It was the only punishment he had ever even threatened, and she felt that she would rather a thousand times be sick or even die herself than have him hear the fiddler crying out in fear of it. "It is de fever in her head," she said to him.

"I know," her uncle answered quietly. "We can have a lamp, Clothilde, now that I am here." But as the flame flickered upon him, his face seemed to shrink from the light, and there was such bitter heartbreak in it that the tears sprang to Clothilde's eyes. "Put it on the wheel," he said. "I want to fix some medicine. How long has she been like this?"

Clothilde told him all about the day, and he nodded slowly as he prepared his medicines and listened. Once or twice his hand clenched

at the thought of the hours in which he had been needed, and Clothilde had not known. At the end he looked up and met her eyes. She threw herself down beside him. "Uncle Giacomo," she sobbed, "I can'd live if de fiddler dies, I can'd, I can'd! I tried to do de right, I tried to do w'at yo' tole me, but I did n't know, oh, Uncle Giacomo, I did n't know."

Giacomo lifted her, and held her close in his arms. "My Clothilde, you did right," he said, brokenly. "No one could have done better. You have been so faithful—so loving—. There will never be a way to thank you; but, my child, next to the fiddler I love you best of anything on earth."

She rested trembling against his shoulder, breathing in relief. "It 'as been so lonesome," she whispered, "an' de po' littl' fiddler —oh, Uncle Giacomo, I don' want to live if she don' get well."

Giacomo put her gently away from him. "Bring me some water now," he said. "We 're all going to live and see happy days, my child."

It is the terror and the blessing of yellow fever that the crisis comes so soon. Toward

morning of the second night after Giacomo came home Troululu's fever ceased. Her father sat beside her watching the quiet sleep into which she had fallen, and taking note of every breath she breathed, for it is after the fever that the collapse comes in which people die. Clothilde was in her room asleep.

Just as daylight began to show the fiddler wakened. Her face was turned from Giacomo and she did not see him at first, but her eyes rested on the wheel. Then she looked down at her little hands, grown thin by even those three wasting days. "My papa did n't make me into a pint cup," she said weakly.

Giacomo had risen and was bending over her. A quick tear dropped upon the small weak hands. The fiddler raised her eyes with the slowness of exhaustion. Wonder and joy sprang into them. "My papa," she cried, "you 've comed home from the blue, blue sky."

He kissed her and held her two hands in his, but he dared not say very much. The doctor's constant word to him had been that excitement was bad. "My Troululu, my little fiddler," he whispered once or twice. It

seemed selfish to have so much joy all alone, but Clothilde was sleeping and the fiddler's little mother could not come back to them out of her far blue sky. He felt very sorry for her alone in heaven and he hoped she knew.

When Clothilde came out from her room, the fiddler was sleeping again. "Go right out into the village and tell the folks that we think she's safe," Giacomo whispered, "there 's not a soul among 'em now that does n't want to hear."

A good many days later, when he was well enough to walk quietly over to the pottery, the doctor said, "I hope, Barse, that you know it was n't entirely your skill as a nurse that saved all our last patients from the graveyard." He was very thin, and he looked years older than when he was at the pottery before; but there was a boyish twinkle in his eyes.

"Why, no," Giacomo answered, "I supposed it was your skill."

"Stuff," said the doctor. "And it was n't because your wheel shines in the dark, as I am pleased to hear the people telling me, either."

"Well, I know that," said the potter, "but if it was n't either of us, what was it?"

"It was the queer, natural course of the thing," the doctor answered. "As I told you, it was never very virulent, even at the first, though there were lots of deaths from pure fright, and by the time I persuaded Philipe Gomez into sending for you, its strength was pretty well played out; the cases were all mild."

Giacomo looked up keenly. The two were alone, for Clothilde had the fiddler out for her first trial of sunshine. "Did you wait for that?" he asked.

"Huh," said the doctor, "if I did, do you reckon I 'd say so?"

Giacomo reached out his hand and clasped the doctor's. "The whole town is friends and brothers with me now," he said, "but as long as I live, I 'll never forget the first time you shook hands with me. I wish it was n't such hard talking, doctor."

"Talking!" scoffed the doctor; "if you want any talking done, get that little Santa Claus to do it. Perhaps you don't understand that it was her talking brought the whole town over."

"I think I understand everything," the potter said.

They were silent a little while, then the doc-

tor broke out in his rough, blunt way. "'Spose you 've got to send her back to her mother as soon as the frost comes, so it's safe for her folks. She 's not going to have the fever, and neither are you, that's plain."

Giacomo's bright eyes grew tender. "That poor little mother of hers," he said, "to think of her doing without her all this time! Of course she 's going back, but my name 's not Giacomo any more, if she stays there all the while. I think my sister-in-law and I will have to share her — share and share alike. I want a chance to give her the best time any girl in this world ever had. I don't have much to do it with, but she and I know each other, and I can make her happy."

"Sounds kind of happy now," the doctor said. "What they up to out there?"

Giacomo opened the door and peeped into the yard. "She 's building another wall of pots for her and the fiddler to climb up on, up to the blue sky," he said.

"I reckon your little crab will knock it down before it gets too high," the doctor whispered, motioning Giacomo to open the door wide enough for him to see. The air was fresh with the first crispness of autumn, and the

sunlight glinted down upon the children at their work.

"Three, four, nine little angels are helping us, papa," the fiddler cried; "don't you see their big, white wings?"

When frost came, removing the last danger from the town, the refugees began returning, one by one. As soon as they had been greeted, their friends were sure to say, "Come round with us to the pottery this evening, and look over the queer tricks Barse has been making on his wheel."

And on dark nights, when they went late past the pottery, and saw the faint light shining from the window between the black fantastic forms, there was not a man, woman, or child in Potosi who did not bow his head and murmur in gratitude, "It is a wonderful wheel. It is the wheel of the *bon Dieu*."

THE END.

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